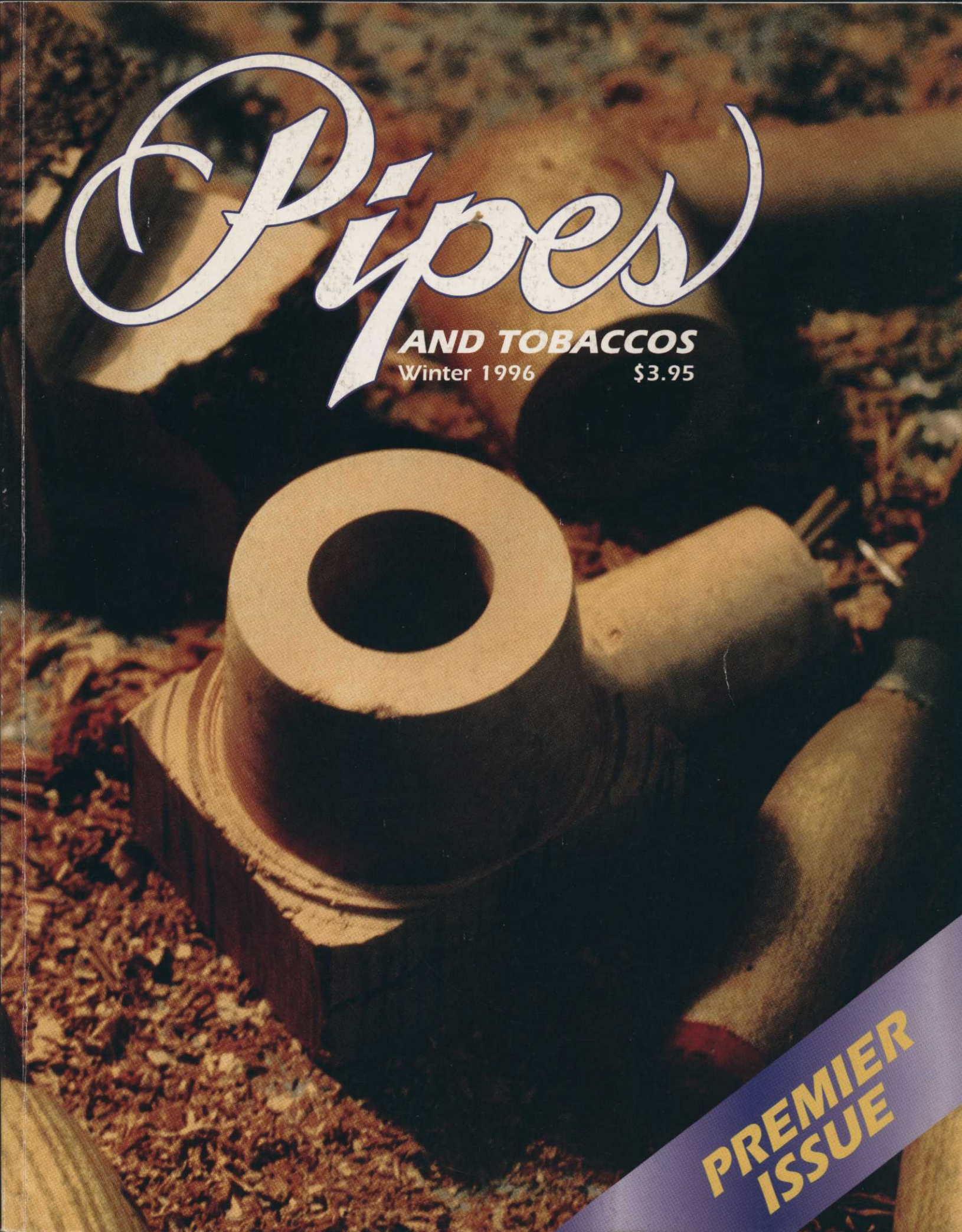
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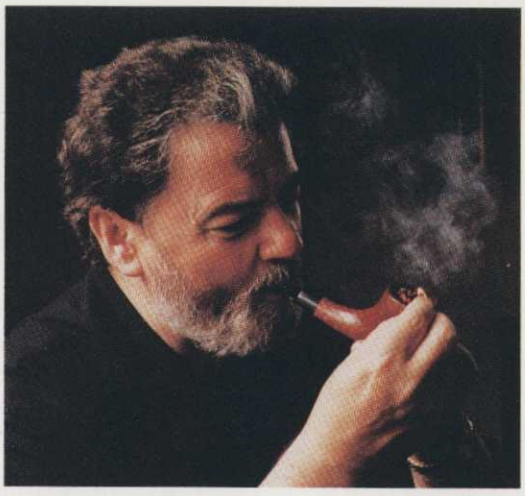

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Welcome to a different experience

I grew up with my father's pipes always around me. I knew their smells, their feel, their smooth curves that lured my touch. Right from the beginning, I knew that a pipe wasn't just a smoke, but, rather, a special adventure.

I learned to connect pipes with thoughtful contemplation, a sense of peace and appreciated pleasure. I found that a pipe is a magical object that frees the mind from time and distance. It involves all the senses in a very special way, freeing creativity and imagination.

In a way, I learned what people have learned for thousands of years—pipe smoking is something above and beyond normal experiences.

It is my hope that these feelings come through in this first issue of *Pipes and tobaccos*. In it I have tried to pull together some of the myriad elements of pipe smoking, providing insights when possible into some of the people, events and products that help make pipe smokers devotees of the art.

Future issues will follow the themes initiated here. We intend to be your eyes, ears and legs. We will follow the legends of pipes and tobaccos all over the United States and abroad. We will visit makers of fine tobaccos and beautiful pipes in every issue. New products will be balanced with historic pieces, such as the glorious Viennese meerschaum pipe described in the article beginning on page 44.

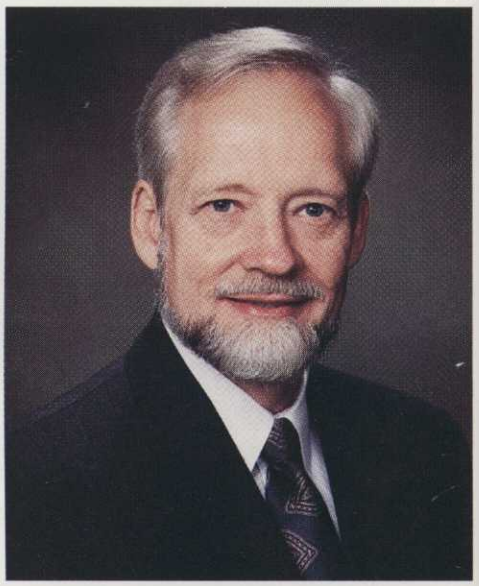
And together we will meet and get to know outstanding individuals like James Galway, the world's most famous flutist (page 32), who shares your love of a good pipe and a stimulating blend of tobacco.

As a subscriber to *Pipes and tobaccos*, you will visit Saint-Claude, France, the home of briar pipes; learn about the various tobaccos in your favorite blends; meet kindred spirits from all walks of life; and, in general, join us in celebrating pipes and tobaccos.

Write me! Tell me what you liked and didn't like in this first issue and the subjects about which you would most enjoy reading. This is a joint venture between you and me. Let's make sure we enjoy ourselves to the fullest!

Dayton H. Matlick

Dayton H. Matlick
Editor-in-chief



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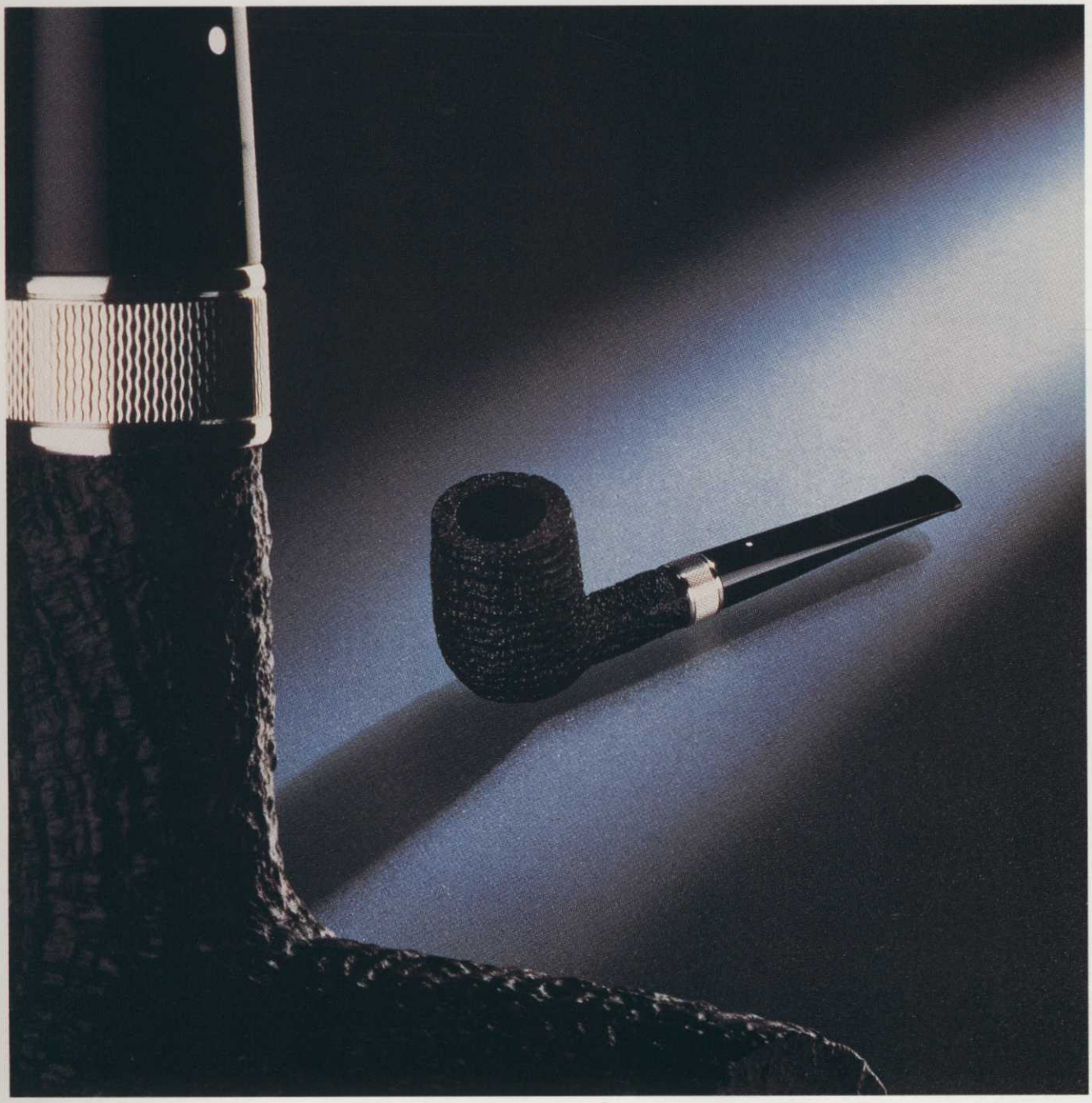

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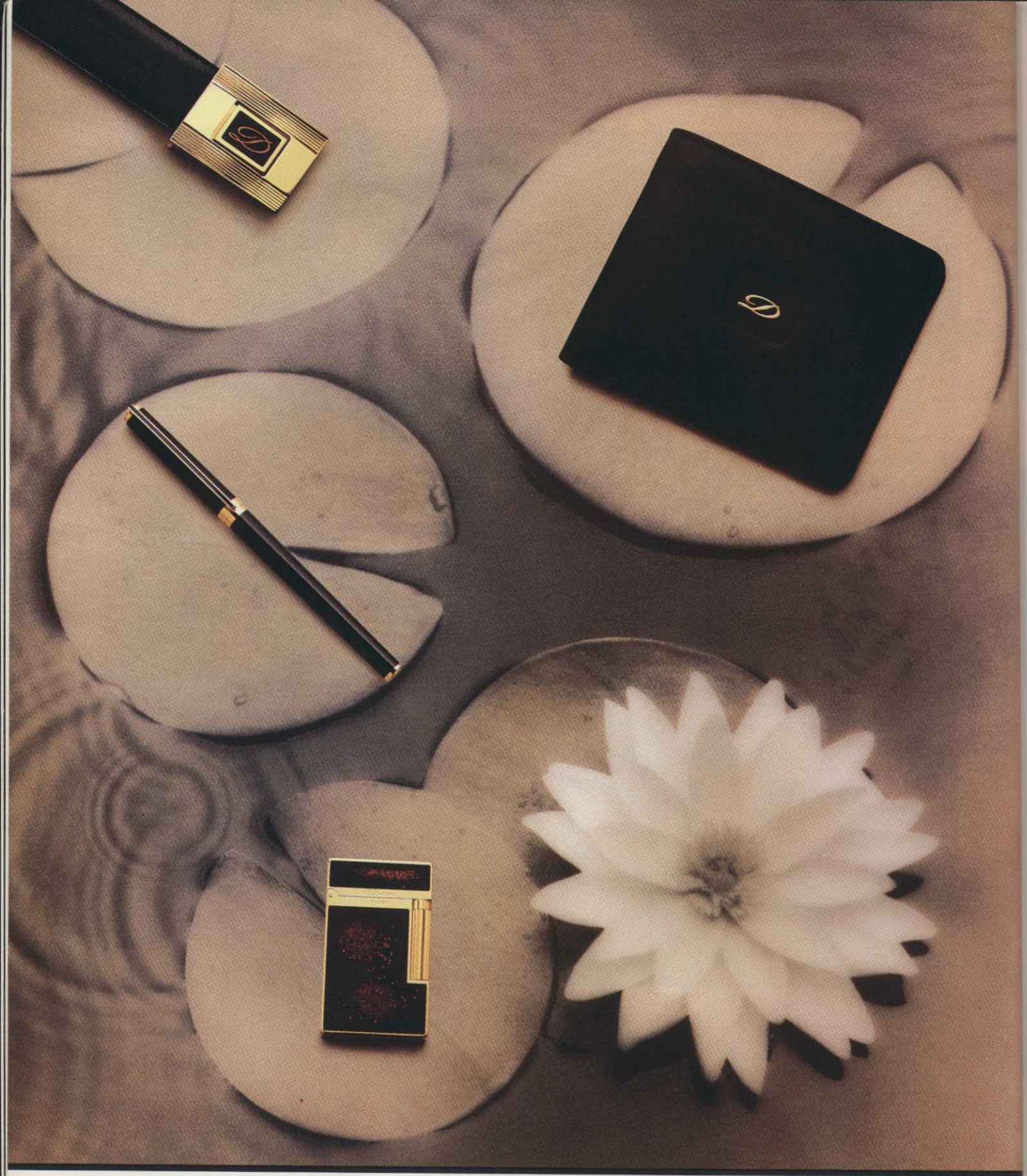

S.T. Dupont

PARIS

Pipe Camaraderie

Pipe clubs provide opportunities to share thoughts, ask questions and enjoy your pipes and tobaccos in a positive atmosphere.

by Phil Bowling

Feet up, logs flickering in the fireplace. It's 7 p.m. Ideal time to try that new blend just stocked by your favorite tobacconist.

So you pop open the tin, pull your favorite pipe from the pipe stand, and carefully fill the bowl.

Time to relax.

The false light provides some interesting hints. The second light offers the full body of the new blend.

Mmmmmmm. Not bad...not bad at all! A quick glance at the clock reminds you that your pipe-smoking buddy, who has moved across the country, is in another time zone and still at work. Nobody with whom you can share your find. In consolation, you return to the rich undertones and smooth draw, making a mental note that you need to call him later.

Does this scenario ring true? Nobody to talk to about pipes and tobaccos and all the intriguing aspects of pipe smoking? Then perhaps a pipe club is for you.

Don't worry—there are no secret handshakes, no big dues. Pipe clubs, instead, are often informal gatherings of people just like you. "Regulars" who share

The annual CORPS charity auction has become a time of fun and jokes in addition to serving a good cause.

and compare pipe notes—and solve all of the world's problems in an evening's conversation.

Never heard of a pipe club? They exist in many cities and towns around the globe. Where would you find such a club? The first place to check is with a good tobacconist who carries a solid line of pipes, tobaccos and accessories. Second choice involves searching pipe newsgroups on the Internet.

It may turn out that other customers of your tobacconist have a gathering—informal or established. You may also learn that there are others who are as frustrated as you and who would welcome the chance for fellowship.

That is the case with a group of folks in Richmond, Va., who yearned to share pipe tales with others so badly that they became "loiterers" at the local tobacconist, until they were nudged into forming a club.

What started with a few acquaintances chatting around the counter at a neighborhood tobacco shop in Richmond some 11 years ago has grown into a strong organization devoted exclusively to the pipe. The Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers (CORPS) celebrated its 11th birthday back in October. The group now has 200-plus members from around the world.

Linwood Hines, secretary and past president of CORPS, says the organization of the club proved quite easy. "Things just began to happen and before we knew it we were a club, and here we are today, after 11 years," he says.

His love for pipe smoking drew Hines into the retail tobacco business in the late 1970s. Although he had a full-time job as an engineer for cigarette-maker Philip Morris in Richmond, Hines took on the duties of a part-time employee at a Tinder Box in the city. The work at the tobacco shop seemed more like an excuse to smoke his pipe and share knowledge about pipes with others, while, he points out, he was getting paid for it.

Although Hines left his part-time job at the tobacco shop some years ago, he has not forgotten either the store or the owner. It was the store's owner who inadvertently created CORPS. Hines and another employee of the store loved talking about pipes so much that they developed a following of customers during their shifts.

"These customers would come in and they basically wanted to chew the fat and talk pipes with us on a regular basis," Hines admits. "And, of course, we would smoke our pipes while we visited."

As the gatherings became more of a regular occurrence, the owner approached the two employees and said, "Look, if you're going to have this many people in here standing around talking about pipes, why don't you form a club?"

Questions immediately filled their heads. A club? How could we get such a club started? What should we do first?

After the initial shock of the idea wore off, the two employees decided to give it a try. They made an announcement to all the regulars at the tobacco shop, created some fliers and had "new club" announcements play on the radio.

His bosses at Philip Morris even told Hines they could use a meeting room at the offices for the initial meeting. After all, Philip Morris is a tobacco giant, and it is located in a city rich with tobacco heritage.

The turnout was amazing. People from all walks of life showed up for this

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"water-testing" meeting. Everyone seemed enthusiastic about starting a club to meet regularly—for the sole purpose of sharing one's love for the pipe.

Shortly, a name was established and monthly meetings were planned for the general membership. Monthly executive committee meetings were also established for the officers to allow for planning and taking care of the "dry" business end of things, Hines says.

Now, a short program is the typical plan for the monthly general meeting. "Since Richmond is so rich in tobacco history, we have little problem with trying to have programs relative to the subject," Hines says. In the 11 years since forming the group, some of the programs have proved so popular that they have been repeated on an annual basis. Seminars have also been held, dealing with the care of pipes and pipe repairing and cleaning procedures.

Just a year after the organization got its start, members began talking about what they could do as an annual event. Something big. Something that everyone would look forward to all year long. An exposition.

Inspired by the success of two expos—a 1982 show held by a tobacco company on the West Coast and a 1984 Pipe Collectors International event—the CORPS began making plans. "We advertised locally and in a few tobacco shops around the Richmond area," Hines says.

Not sure of what they would get, the group was hopeful. Like the start-up of the club, the Pipe Smokers' Celebration & Exposition proved to be a huge success. "We couldn't keep the doors closed. People came from everywhere, just to see what we were all about," Hines says.

With the success of the first show in their heads, the group decided to expand the show the following year. Seminars were added to the slate in the subsequent years and thrived, until the costs of bringing in the speakers became prohibitive. During the past few years, the event has returned to conducting the expo with seminars.

One of the disadvantages of having a club and not charging hefty annual dues for the general membership is a lack of cash on hand. "We would love to have a banquet with a speaker at the annual expo, but the CORPS doesn't have the funds to bring someone in," Hines says. "We basically make no money on the show after expenses, and any money that we do bring in goes to our local charities."

Then why not change? Why not begin charging members a hefty annual due for the club? That's not the style of the group, and that's not the original purpose of the CORPS, Hines says.

While it might be easy to get discouraged, Hines says the group doesn't let finances bog them down. Instead, they look at the successes of the annual show, albeit with meager funds, and look toward the future. This past expo, held Columbus Day weekend, was the group's 10th annual show.

"This type of thing can and does work," Hines says. "Expos have been taking place for a long time now in Europe and have been supported by the tobacco and pipe industries."

As for CORPS' shows, some of the big players usually attend and have a booth at the event. Ashton Tobacco Products, Dunhill, Hollco Rohr, James B. Russell, Mastercraft Pipes, Mastro de Paja and McClelland Tobaccos are a few of the reg-

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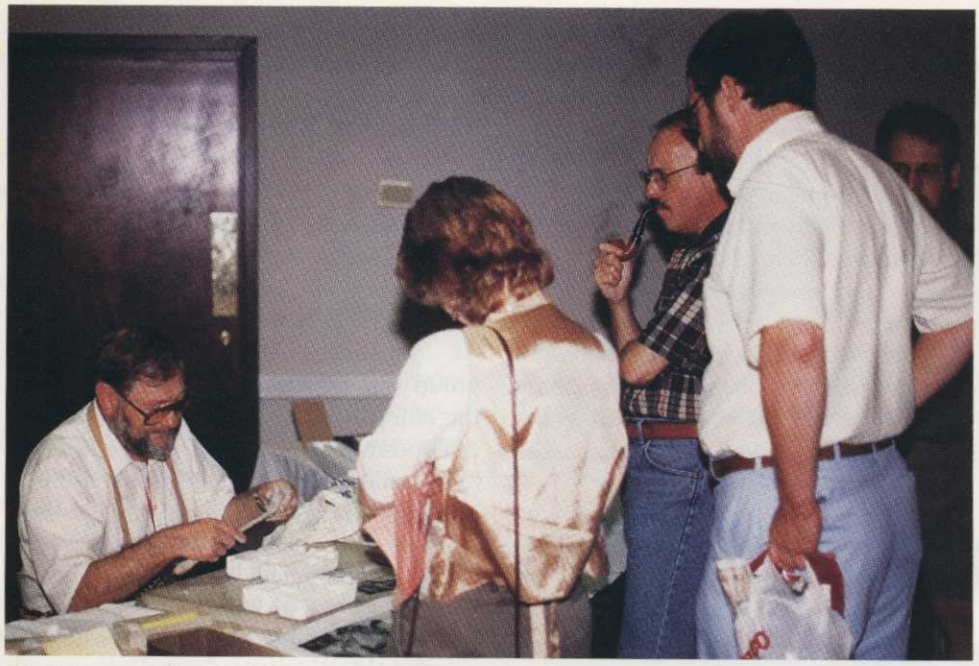
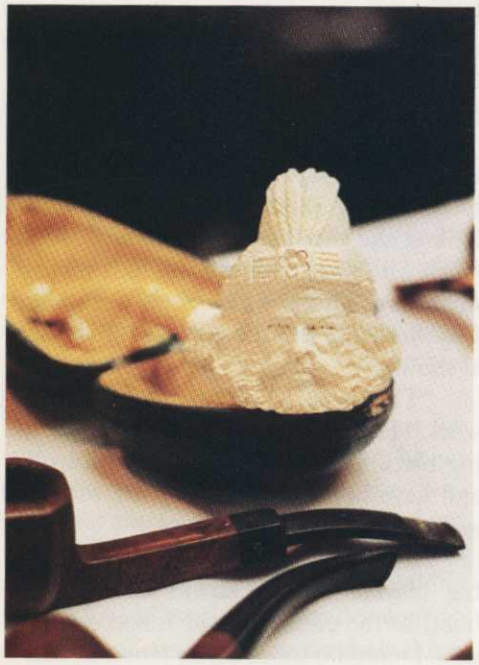


English pipemaker David Cooper drew fascinated crowds at the CORPS Celebration and Exposition as he demonstrated clay pipe-making techniques and procedures.

ular exhibitors. In addition, many collectors and enthusiasts of pipe memorabilia exhibit at the shows.

During the past four years, the number of exhibitors has fluctuated between 75 and 100. The event has always been held at one of the local Holiday Inns, offering a cozy setting for the pipe smokers attending and exhibiting. About 300 folks usually walk through the doors of the free-to-the-public expo each year.

The annual show is a three-day event, which begins on Friday evening with a cocktail party. Following the party, small groups break off and head out for dinner.



Displays of all kinds filled the site of the Celebration and Expo.

The evening is designed to allow the regulars to get caught up on happenings over the past year and to get psyched up for the weekend celebration. Many of the attendees live several hours from the Richmond area, and this is their only chance to visit with local members.

Saturday morning always gets off to an early start with the exhibitors setting up their booths and displays before the show gets started around 10 a.m. Thankfully, Hines says, there have always been lots of folks waiting to get in the door when the show opened each year.

The tables in the room overflow with new pipes, refurbished pipes, collector's pieces, tobacco tins, books and magazines, and a hearty supply of pipe tobacco blends. Many exhibitors don't come to necessarily sell their wares, but to simply share their collection with those interested in seeing it.

Visitors mill through the room, often stopping to compare and share pipe tales. And there is no stereotyping the crowd of exhibitors or attendees—young, old, male, female, newcomers, experienced smokers, and even some dogs and toddlers.

Shortly after lunch on Saturday, the brave gather around for the annual pipe smoking contest. The person who is able to smoke his or her bowl of tobacco the longest will be deemed the winner.

For the 1995 contest, a total of 16 avid smokers entered the ring. While only one person walked away with the title, prizes were awarded to the second and third place winners.

Patience was needed for such a contest. Each of the participants was given 3.3 grams of tobacco, two wooden matches and a chair to sit in. The half hour passed and about half of the folks had been discounted.

At the 40-minute mark, a few more lost the battle to keep their pipes lit. Three people were left. None of the men looked at one another, nor seemed to show any signs of pressure.

With 44 minutes and 50 seconds under his belt, Jeff Lively of Richmond drew on his pipe.

Nothing happened.

He was out. But he nailed third place and some nice tobacco prizes.

Just five minutes later, Henry Klos, Bordertown, N.J., lost out. He was to be contented with second place for this contest.

Jim Thomas, Ridge, Md., was left. But, his pipe was still going. Most of the onlookers had walked away. A few of his friends stayed and chatted. Finally, with 1 hour and 15 seconds having passed, he let his pipe go out.

"I could have probably smoked a little longer, but it was starting to taste bad," he says. And he was quite pleased with the array of tobaccos and accessories with which he was awarded.

Sunday's event got underway early. It was around lunchtime when the annual William F. Porter Memorial Pipe Rack Auction got started. The event, featuring donated wares, raises money for children's charities in the Richmond area.

"It is because of this auction and what the people are willing to give that we in turn are able to support children of the communities and the charities locally," Hines says. "And the way we do the auction allows everyone to have some fun while doing something really good for others."

How did the auction get its name? "At the first auction, someone donated this pipe rack that looked amateurishly handcarved from rough wood," Hines says with a bit of a laugh in his voice. "We played it up at the auction and ended up getting $120 for it."

As a joke, the winning bidder brought the pipe rack back the next year and donated it again—now an annual ritual. "The name William F. Porter was carved into the rack and that's how we named our

auction—in honor of whomever made this priceless rack that has brought in so much fun and money over the years," Hines says.

While the annual expo is clearly the biggest event conducted by CORPS, the group also has an annual Christmas dinner for its members, takes local orphans to baseball games and raises funds for other charity projects in the Richmond area.

Their community efforts, while unselfish at heart, have some positive results for the group, Hines admits. With its charitable work, the group has been given a fair share of media attention over the years—something strange in today's anti-tobacco setting. The media now even gives coverage to the annual expo. "That just happens to be one of the perks we get back from working to help others," Hines says.

If you are not currently involved in a pipe club in your area and would like to find a few friends who won't keep waving their hands in your face the whole time you are smoking, it is time to find a club. As stated earlier, the place to start is your local tobacconist, the folks who sell you your products and, ideally, make you feel good about your pipe hobby.

Many larger cities have publicized their groups, which are better known than others. Just ask around, you may already know some folks involved in a pipe club.

Another means of finding solace is through the Internet, the information superhighway, that mystery void that links computer and telephones from all over the world. One of the Internet's newsgroups devoted to pipe lovers is *Pipes Digest*.

This is a free electronic mailing of comments from pipe, and cigar, smokers from around the country. Each digest offers a compilation of comments from its subscribers—usually about a week's worth. Folks give on-line reviews of new blends, ramblings about favorite pipes and tobaccos, and discussions of positive and negative reactions to smoking in public.

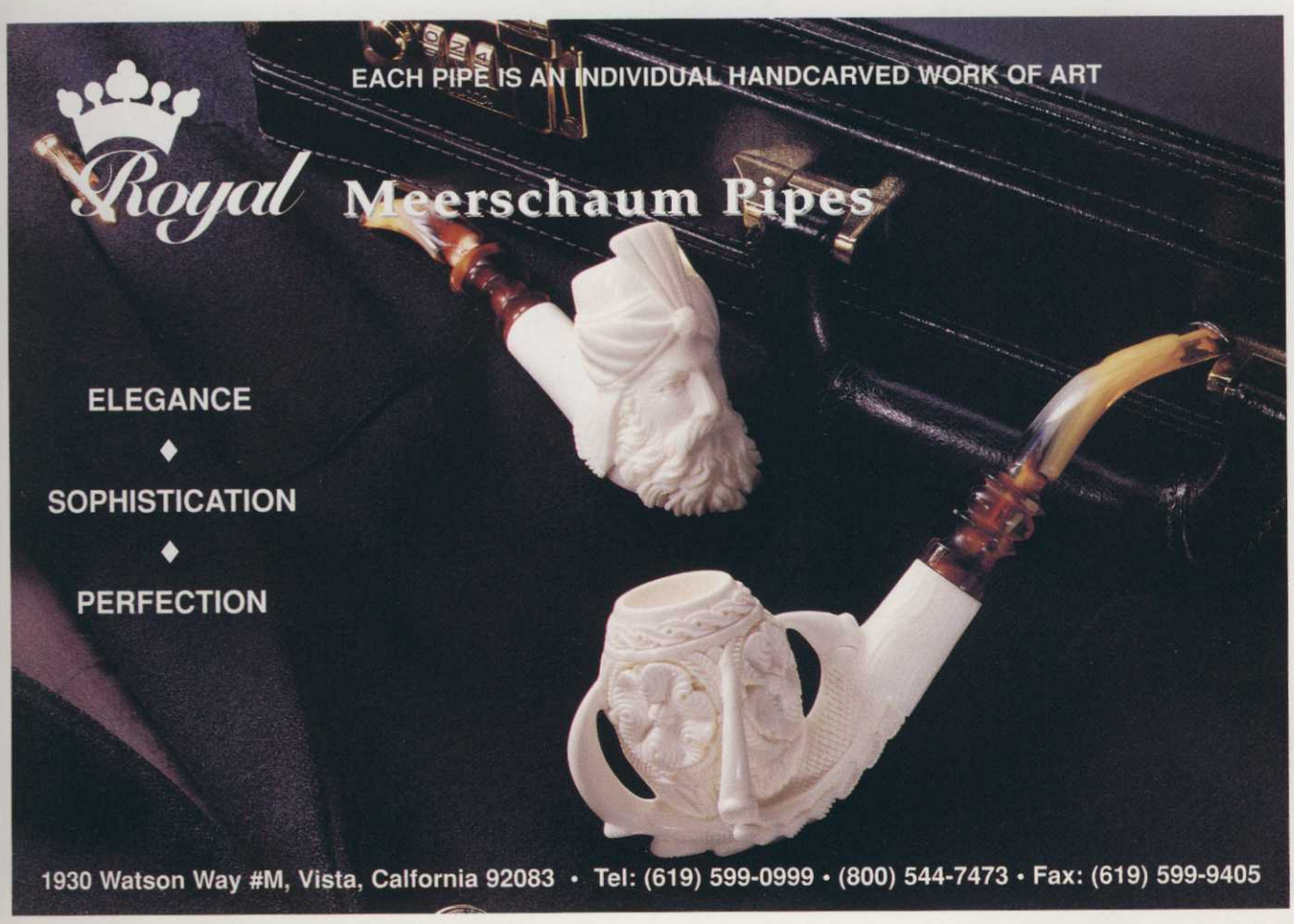
If he were around today, Sherlock Holmes would likely be poised in front of his computer terminal each week, scrolling through the pages of messages and puffing on his pipe. This link provides a relatively inexpensive way of meeting fellow pipe lovers and learning more about the hobby.

If you are not a member, you can get on the subscription list by sending a piece of e-mail to its moderator, Steve Masticola, at: masticol@scr.siemens.com.

The *Pipes Digest* also has a World Wide Web address: http://www.tacoma.net/~pipes. Back issues of the digest can be downloaded from this site, as well as lists of cigar and pipe clubs, retailers and related merchandisers.

If you are not computer literate, look around your office, talk to friends. It is likely you are close to someone who accesses the Internet through one of many commercial on-line services such as America Online, Compuserve and Prodigy. Such a friend might just be willing to teach you the ropes of "surfing the net" or gather some of the data and share a hard copy with you.

If you are involved in a pipe smokers club, we urge you to contact *PIPES and tobaccos* with information about your club. We will establish a database on all clubs responding and will pass this information on to interested pipe smokers. ***P&T***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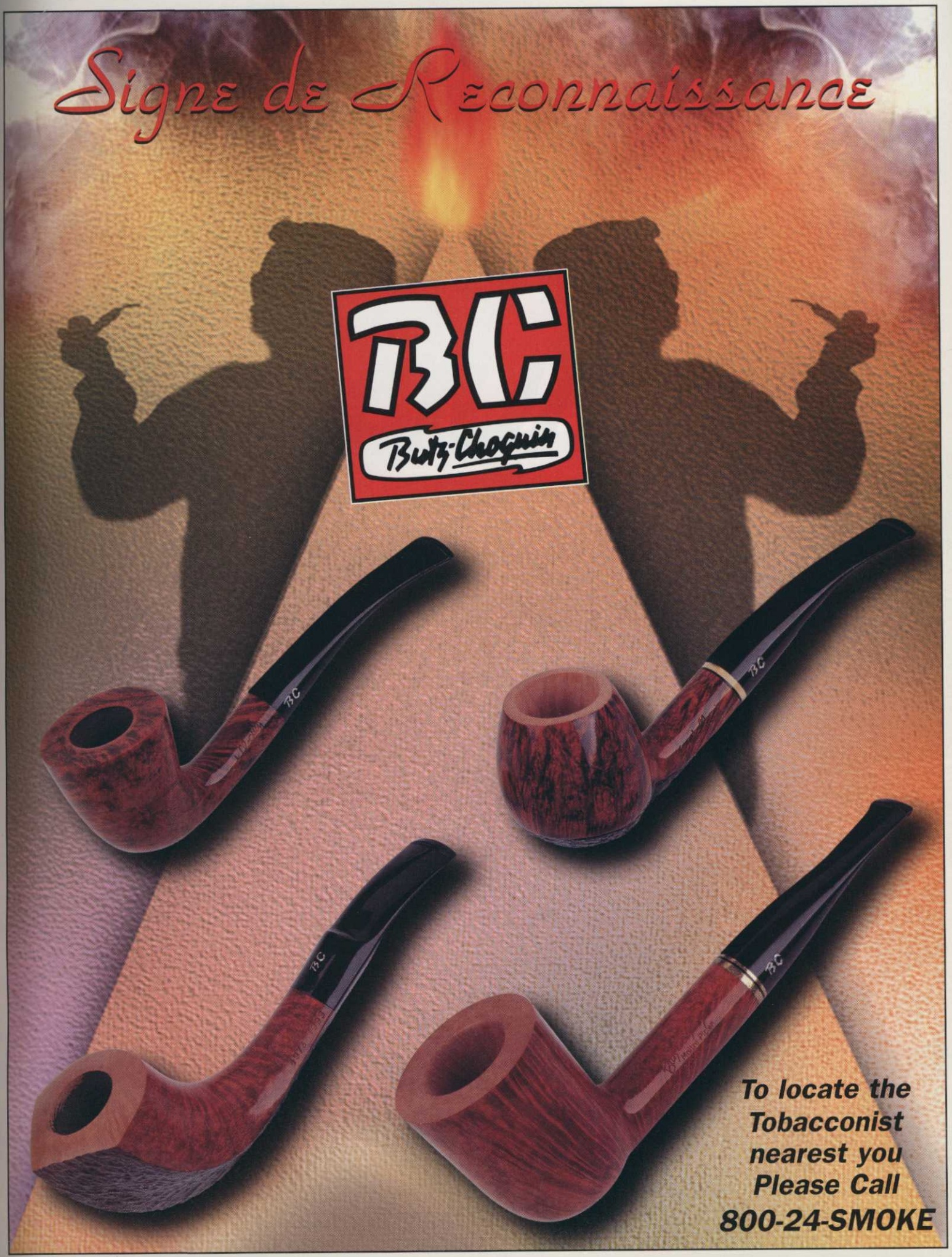
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CRUISES

Of the 10 major cruise lines, only three will let you smoke your pipe inside, out of the weather

by Mary Jo Wagner

Picture a floating palace, complete with swimming pools, massage therapists, casino, more meals a day than you can count, sunshine, exotic islands awaiting you, people to satisfy your every whim.

The ultimate vacation, a cruise is a great way to dump stress and pamper yourself.

But before you run out to book a passage, be aware that seven out of 10 cruise lines consider your pipe to be outdoor entertainment.

P&T investigated 10 major cruise lines to determine their pipe-friendly rating. The cruise lines studied were: Carnival, Celebrity, Commodore, Cunard, Discovery, Holland America, Norwegian, Princess, Royal Caribbean and Seabourn.

Of those 10, only three rated as being even partially pipe friendly: Norwegian, Carnival and Princess. (For our purposes, partially pipe-friendly means you can smoke your pipe in at least one public room.) The other seven limit pipe smoking to the outside decks.

Norwegian was chosen as the most smoker-friendly cruise line (although just barely), but they declined the award. Public Relations Director Fran Sevcik stated that Norwegian doesn't feel they have a liberal smoking policy, and, in fact, they are leaning more toward the nonsmoker.

Their newest cruise ship, the Leeward, was introduced last October, bringing Norwegian's total cruise ships to five. With weekly departures from Miami, Fort Lauderdale, New York, San Juan and Vancouver, Norwegian sails to Alaska, the Bahamas, Bermuda, the Caribbean and Mexico. Passengers have the choice of three, four and seven-day cruises.

Sevcik says that the starboard, or right, side of the ship is dedicated to smokers. That means cabins and any sections of public rooms that fall on the right side of the ship are fair game for smoking, including pipe smoking.

On each ship in Norwegian's fleet, except the Leeward where both of its dining rooms are nonsmoking, there is at least one nonsmoking dining room and all of the other dining areas have designated smoking sections. Pipes, however, are not allowed in the smoking dining areas. And cigars are not allowed at all on board Norwegian ships.

But what Sevcik described is not what *P&T* found upon boarding the docked Leeward in the port of Miami. Passengers arriving on the ship receive a "Cruise News" newsletter that details the events of each day. Under the "Rules & Regulations" section it states that no smoking is allowed in the Stardust Lounge—the main show lounge—at any time. And with the exception of your cabin, pipes and cigars are only permitted on open decks, which contradicts Sevcik.

Tell that to Peter Walsh, a lone pipe smoker in the Sports Bar on the ship. In between puffs, he told us this was his first cruise and he was looking forward to a "totally stress-free holiday." When we pointed out to him that the newsletter states pipe smoking is allowed only on deck, Walsh grinned and shrugged his shoulders. "I've been sitting here for 30 minutes and no one has bothered me," he says. "Until someone does, I'll continue to enjoy my pipe."

Touring the ship the first time, we couldn't find any signs delineating smoking and nonsmoking areas in any public room, except the main dining room. Upon making a second round on the ship later in the afternoon, signs permitting smoking were set on tables in appropriate areas. Ashtrays were provided in each

ECSTASY
Carnival

cabin on the right side of the ship.

This agreed with what passengers had to say about the Leeward.

"No smoking was allowed in the dining room and where they had stage shows, but everywhere else you could smoke," said Cynthia Burton as she smoked a cigarette while waiting to go to the airport.

Sevcik also says Norwegian Lines could accommodate a large pipe-smoking group who wanted to take a cruise. They've done it in the past. For example, the Tobacconists Association of America took a smoking party cruise last year, and members smoked their pipes and stogies anywhere they chose throughout the three-day cruise to Mexico and back, with the exception of the designated nonsmoking areas in the dining rooms.

Carnival

Carnival Line has ports in Miami, Los Angeles, San Juan and Vancouver. Its 10 ships sail weekly to Alaska, the Bahamas, Baja and the Mexican Riviera, and the Caribbean for three-, four- or seven-day cruises.

Trieste Wilde summed up her four-day cruise to the Caribbean in four words: "It was a blast."

Wilde agreed to be a "reporter" for *P&T* and observe people smoking on the cruise and where they were smoking.

"I only saw one person smoking a pipe, and he was in the Stripes discotheque," she says. "In the Blue Sapphire Lounge, the main show lounge, people were smoking cigarettes. There was smoking in restrooms, halls, on the stairs and in the casino. But I don't think anyone was smoking in the dining room.

"There was a couple who sat with me in many different places and the man smoked," she continues. "No one ever approached him and told him that he couldn't smoke in the areas we were in."

Wilde says she never saw a sign that said you couldn't smoke, let alone specifying which kind of smoke was permitted.

But Chris Phillips had a different recollection. He says pipes and cigars were not allowed inside and no smoking was permitted in the show lounges. Perhaps he sailed with a more strict Carnival crew.

How does this relate to what we were told by Carnival public relations staff?

Jennifer de la Cruz, public relations manager, says that the same policy is in effect for all 10 of their ships. No smoking is allowed in the dining rooms and the main show lounge (the Sapphire Blue Lounge). In the smaller show lounge there are designated areas where smoking is permitted. And all other public rooms are smoking areas.

Anywhere cigarettes are allowed, she says, people can smoke pipes and cigars. That would mean that pipes and cigars could be smoked inside.

De la Cruz also contends that a large smoking group could be accommodated on a Carnival cruise, regardless if they smoke pipes or cigars.

PRINCESS CRUISES®

Out of all three cruise lines studied, Princess was the most difficult from which to obtain information. Because they were preparing for the celebration of a new ship, which they launched last December, the public relations staff was nowhere to be found the majority of the time.

Princess has nine operating ships that sail weekly for seven-day cruises or longer. They offer sailing destinations to Alaska, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe, New England and the Panama Canal, with U.S. ports of embarkation in Fort Lauderdale (Port Everglades), Los Angeles, San Diego and Seattle.

1996 marks the beginning of smoke-free dining rooms for the entire Princess fleet. The main showrooms are also smoke-free, but all of the other passenger entertainment and informal dining areas have smoking sections.

Pipes are permitted in those public rooms with smoking sections; cigars are limited to the deck.

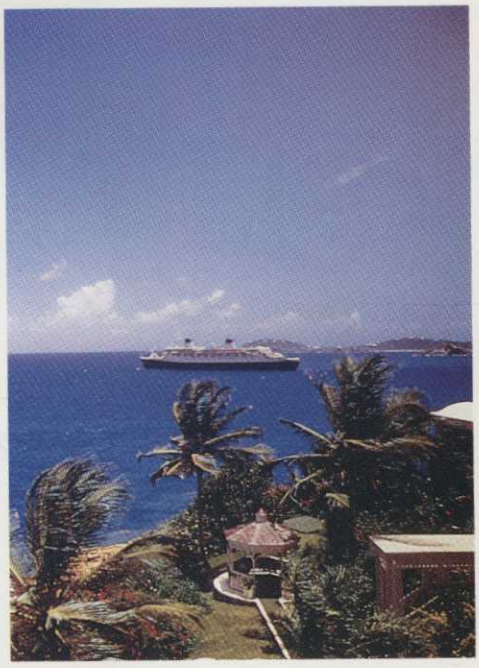
Special arrangements can be made for pipe-smoking groups interested in celebrating on a Princess cruise, as well as the other two lines that were selected.

Cigarettes are clearly the smoking method of choice for all 10 of the cruise lines we talked to, but Norwegian, Carnival and Princess cater slightly to the pipe smoker as well.

All three cruise lines possess beautiful ships and offer so many activities onboard that passengers need not go ashore, unless they choose to. Gigantic, luxurious resorts on water, each ship is the perfect way to be kind to yourself and to a special other person or persons in your life.

All 10 cruise lines will wine and dine you, cater to your every need, quietly transport you to some of the most breathtaking sights you have ever seen.

But only three out of the 10 will let you smoke your pipe inside, out of the weather. So choose wisely. ***P&T***



The Lido Deck pool area of the Carnival ship Ecstasy, shown at the beginning of this article, is an example of the brilliant colors and luxurious surroundings offered cruise passengers. The Sun Princess, left, specializes in Caribbean trips, where dancing on the deck, above, is part of the allure. Warm ports of call are favorites for all cruise lines, including the Norwegian Lines ship Norway, above right.

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Buying a pipe is a "weighty" decision

photos and text
by Richard Carleton Hacker

It was 2 a.m. and I was frantically at work trying to beat the publisher's deadline for my next book. The nocturnal silence of my office was shattered by the phone ringing. Now, only two kinds of people ring me up at 2 a.m.; out-of-state callers who still haven't figured out that California is in a different time zone or another writer who, like me, is plying his trade in these pre-dawn hours. I picked up the phone. It was another writer, a very good friend of mine who is an extremely successful Hollywood screenwriter.

"You've got to help me," his weary voice implored. "I'm up against a wall. I've got a character in a story who smokes a pipe. But I don't know what kind of pipe he should be smoking. What kind of pipe should it be?"

"Tell me something about him," I replied. "What kind of person is he?"

"Arrogant. Opinionated."

"How does he look, physically?"

"Large, almost overbearing. With a

beard. No, make it a goatee. Yes, that's it. A well-waxed, highly stylized goatee."

"What does he do for a living?"

"He's a professor at a highly respected, but little known, university in the east."

"Is he a sympathetic character?"

"No. People hate him. They're put off by him. But his pipe gives him an aura of respect. But that's just it; what kind of a pipe would that be for this type of a person?"

I sat back and took a quick puff on my own gold-banded Dunhill shell ODA. Nope, I thought, looking at the deep etching of the craggy sandblast. It certainly wouldn't be a pipe like this. This pipe would be too refined. Obviously this was the type of pipe that would only be smoked by a thoughtful, caring and trustworthy individual. Like myself.

"Hey, did you fall asleep?" my friend's voice cracked. "Give me a description of this guy's pipe! The script is due in a couple of days!"

"So what," I shouted back. "My manuscript's due in a couple of hours!"

Writers tend to get cranky at two in the morning. There was a long pause.

"OK," I finally said, "I've got it figured out. It should be a meerschaum, large and elaborately carved. That would reflect his personality. And he should be most persnickety in handling it. Only wears white gloves. Carries it in a case that is nonchalantly thrust into his overcoat pocket whenever he goes out. And the carving on the meerschaum should look like him. That will show his ego. The size of the pipe will reflect his overbearing character, and the fact that it is a meerschaum sets it apart from the more common briars that other faculty members and students might be smoking. This guy clearly thinks of himself as apart from and better than the rest."

"That's it!" the screenwriter screeched in exultation. "You've done it! You've cast the perfect pipe in its starring role. I'm amazed. I'm astounded." And with that, the phone slammed down as he obviously began inserting this final element into his character's persona.

Whether or not the pipe did the trick I'll never know, but the screenplay sold and is now being made into a major motion picture.

I hope the large, elaborately-carved meerschaum won't end up on the cutting room floor.

Picking out an imaginary pipe for my friend's imaginary character wasn't difficult, once the physical stature and occu-

The smooth finished Mastro de Paja from Italy (top) exhibits a well-defined straight-grain and is adorned with silver mountings.

The sandblast Stanwell on the left (bottom photo, right) has a smooth-finished rim around the bowl, while the Stanwell on the right shows off a very fine graining pattern, even though it isn't a perfect straightgrain.

pation of the individual was known. But picking out a pipe for an actual person can be slightly more complex, because we can't always accurately define someone else's personality. That's why selecting a pipe for ourselves is much easier than selecting one for someone else.

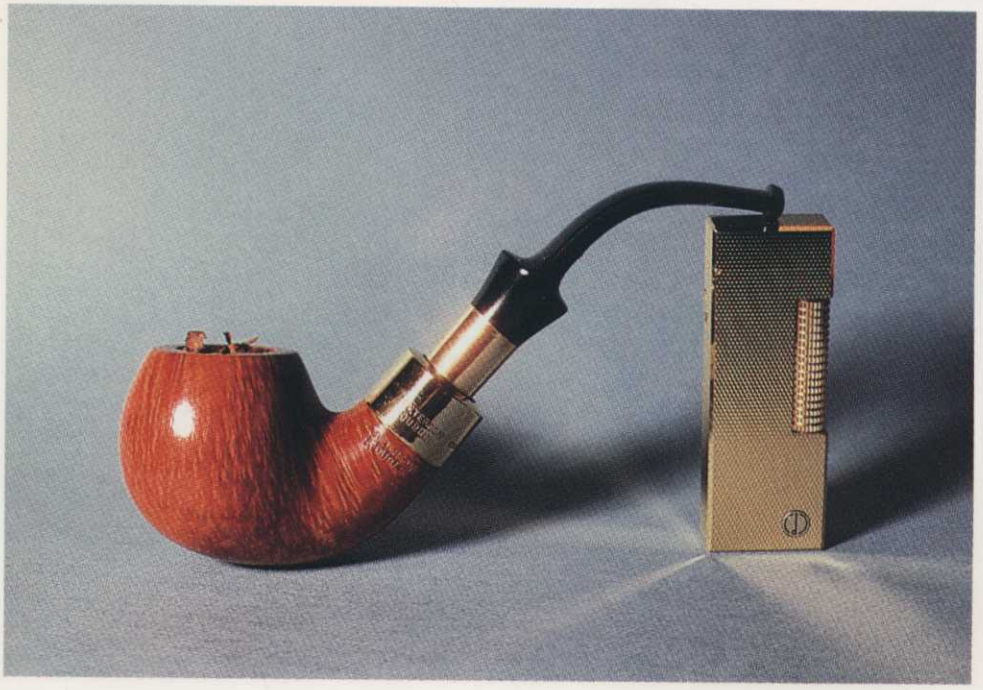
However, picking out a pipe, even for ourselves, can be somewhat intimidating when entering a well-stocked tobacco shop. The vast array of shapes, sizes, colors and brands can be confusing at times even for the most experienced pipe smoker.

For the first-time pipe purchaser, it can be overwhelming enough to make him or her want to go out and buy a sweater instead. But buying a sweater and buying a pipe have a lot in common. With both items, you will be looking for style, color, brand name and price. Indeed, picking the perfect pipe is much like picking out any sort of wearing apparel, for not only must the pipe look good, it must make you look good.

The old adage of buying a pipe that reflects your physical stature is passé and does not fit into today's philosophy of buying something because you like it, rather than because it is "the thing to do." Therefore, tall, slender people need not smoke only long, slim pipes if they prefer short, squatty ones instead, anymore than they should only drink red wine with red meat. If you like white wine, drink white wine. If you like large pipes but you only stand 5 feet tall, smoke large pipes. You will be happier for it. With these prejudices dispelled, the way is clear for us to start auditioning for the perfect pipe. But in order to do so, there are a number of facts and variables we should know.

There are two types of basic pipe shapes, the bent and the straight. Both terms refer to the configurations of the bit and the shank, not the bowl. A bent pipe is easier to hold in the mouth; it "hangs" better. The straight is a bit more debonair and tends to keep the smoke away from your eyes. Also, it is usually easier to pass a pipe cleaner through the shank of a straight-stemmed pipe than a bent one. But which pipe is better? Traditionally, bent pipes sell at a three-to-one ratio over straight pipes, but with younger pipe smokers now entering the scene, this is gradually changing to a two-to-one ratio. Personally, I own an equal number of both bents and straights, and it depends more upon my mood rather than any degree of practicality as to which style I will smoke on any given day.

Whether bent or straight, pipe designs can be classical or freehand. A



A Nording freehand pipe from Denmark (top) with matching tamper.

An elegant smoke: This top-of-the-line gold-mounted pipe from Peterson of Ireland (bottom) is shown with a gold Rollagas lighter from Dunhill.

classical pipe refers to those stalwart designs we usually see in the motion pictures or in magazine ads: straight-stemmed billiards, diamond-shanked bulldogs, long-shanked Canadians, and so on. Freehand pipes got their start in the 1960s and can best be described as anything that is not a classical shape. Bowls and shanks can flare up or out, and the pipes are often semibent rather than full bent. Classical shapes can be made either by hand or by machine; freehands are almost always made by hand. Obviously, handmade pipes are more expensive, although they do not necessarily smoke any better than a machine-made pipe. The secret to selecting a good smoking pipe is in the manufacturer's treatment of the pipe-making material and in the care in which the pipe was made.

The most popular pipes today are made of briarwood, a hard bulbous core that is harvested from within the root system of the heath tree. This wood is solid yet porous and is resistant to fire. Hence, it chars without burning, which makes it ideal for pipes. Softer woods, such as cherrywood and olivewood, are also occasionally used for pipe bowls, but nothing imparts the durability, beauty and practicality of briar. Other pipes are made of carved meerschaum, a lightweight material that comes from Turkey. An even smaller number of pipes are made from corncobs and from fired clay, but because the majority of pipes you will encounter are made from briar, we will use this as our guide for selecting the perfect pipe.

There are four briarwood finishes, and arranged in descending order according to cost, they are: smooth, sandblast, rusticated and carved. A smooth-finished pipe costs more because all of the briar's attributes or flaws are readily apparent to the naked eye. Sandblasted pipes start out as smooth bowls, but are "blasted" by high pressure beads of glass, sand or steel to rapidly erode away the softer wood, leaving a hard craggy surface. Because there is no smooth area showing, sandblasted pipes generally cost less than visibly grained pipes and thus, a misconception has arisen that sandblast pipes are made of inferior wood. True, some of the cheaper blasts are not of the best quality, but when it comes to the highly desirable premium pipes such as Dunhill, Savinelli, Peterson and Ashton, it takes a good piece of briar to make a good sandblast pipe. The grain must be there in the first place or the sandblast will not be deep nor have much of a pattern.

When buying a briar pipe, you will be paying for three things: size of the bowl, grain or sandblast structure of the bowl and, to a certain extent, brand name. Obviously, the bigger the pipe, the more it will cost, all things (such as wood quality) being equal. If a smaller-bowled pipe costs more than a larger-bowled pipe of

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the same finish, it may be because it was handmade, had a better grain structure, or has a more desirable brand name.

Grain structure almost always takes precedence in determining a pipe's cost. In a smooth-finished pipe there are three basic grain patterns: straightgrain, in which the lines of the grain are close together and parallel to each other; bird's eye, which appear as closeknit swirls and are actually the straightgrain ends; and random grain, which may appear as swirls on the pipe bowl. Ironically, none of these three grain patterns affect the smoking quality of a pipe; they are purely cosmetic, but they will definitely affect the cost. Straightgrains and bird's eye pipes are very desirable and most smokers will pay a premium for them. However, the real secret in selecting a briar pipe is to look to total bowl coverage, with no "bald spots" where there is no grain showing. If you have total bowl coverage, then you will have a pipe that "breathes" and will provide a cool smoke.

At first glance, rusticated pipes look like sandblasts, but they are actually handcarved. Thus, they are sometimes more expensive than sandblasts because of all the extra labor that goes into them.

Unless they are antiques, carved pipes are generally of the cheaper variety and should be avoided, as carvings are usually employed to cover up some imperfections in the wood. Likewise, stay away from any pipe that is lacquered, for it will not breath properly and will burn hot and moist.

Now that we have determined the different types of pipe styles and finishes there are, the next thing to look for is construction. Strangely enough, pipes are not always priced according to craftsmanship, and it is possible to find a poorly made straightgrain that costs more than a well-made random grain or sandblast. Consequently, knowing what to look for in a briar pipe can save you tens and, in some cases, even hundreds of dollars, and very often will give you a better pipe for less money.

First, pick up the pipe and heft it. A lighter pipe will burn cooler than a heavier one. Now closely inspect the pipe. The airhole leading from the shank should end right at the very bottom, or "heel," of the tobacco hole. Otherwise you won't be able to smoke all of your tobacco and the bowl will not cake properly. Make sure the walls of the bowl are thick enough so that you won't have a burnout halfway through your first smoke, an irreparable situation wherein a

This Bark finish Ferndown from England (top) appears to be a sandblast, but it is actually rusticated.

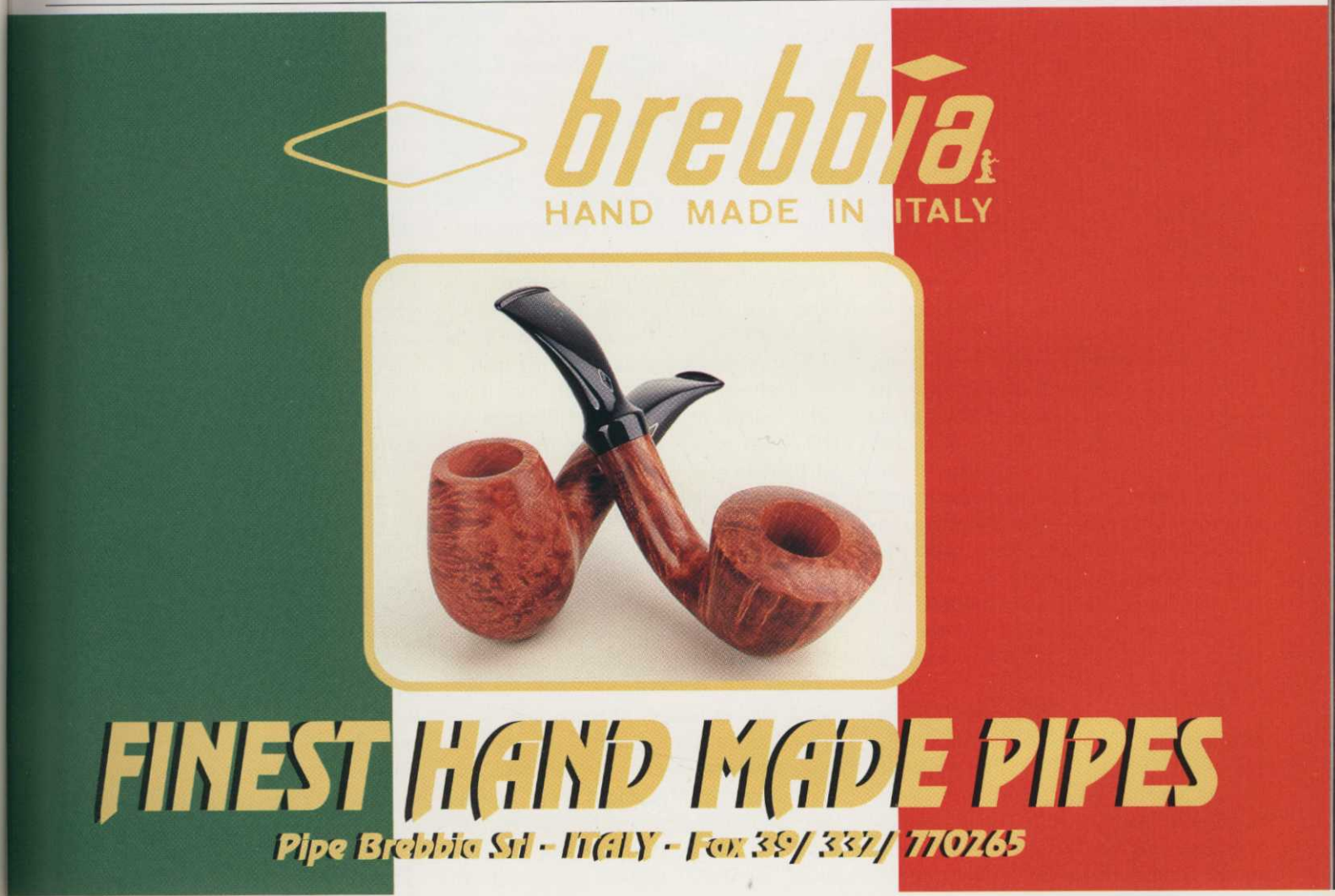
This Paronelli-made olivewood pipe (bottom) will impart a slightly different taste to your tobacco, and the wood will gradually darken after the pipe is smoked over a period of time.

hot spot develops on the inside of the pipe bowl and actually burns through to the outside of your pipe. Run your fingers across the joint between the wooden shank and the bit to make sure the union of the shank and bit is smooth and even. A sloppy fit is an indication of poor workmanship and may portend of other shortcuts the pipemaker took. Ask the tobacconist if you may push a pipe cleaner through the pipe to make sure it won't hang up in the airhole.

Now we come to, esoterically speaking, the most important part of selecting any pipe: its actual fit and feel. In short, do you like it? If not, then no matter how well it may be made or how good a value it is, you will be wasting your money if you buy it because you will never feel good about smoking it. The pipe must be pleasing to your eye and must feel good in your hand. Many tobacconists even have cellophane "try sleeves" which enable you to cover the bit and place it in your mouth to see how it physically looks and feels. (Caution: do not bite down on the bit when you're doing this or your teethmarks will guarantee the tobacconist a sale, whether you like the pipe or not.)

One of my standard rules is to always buy the best you can afford. A well-made expensive pipe is a better long-term value than a poorly made inexpensive one. And yet, cost isn't everything. In addition to the security of choosing from well-known brand names, your tobacconist may have some close-outs, off-brands or privately made pipes that can represent better-than-average quality for below-average prices. The three main criteria in buying any pipe should be: (1) is the pipe well-made? (2) Is it priced within your budget? (3) Do you like it? If the answer to all three questions is "yes," then you've found your superstar pipe! ***P&T***

Richard Carleton Hacker is author of The Ultimate Pipe Book, *one of the best-selling books on the subject worldwide, with more than 50,000 copies in print. He has also written pipe books for Great Britain and Germany, and is producer-host of "The Ultimate Pipe Video." He is a member of the Confrerie des Maitres-Pipiers de Saint-Claude, and is one of only 30 members of the Académie Internationale de la Pipe. He was recently knighted as German Pipe Knight of the Year in recognition of his pipe-related writings and activities.*



Where there's smoke(s), there's fire

By Larry O'Connor

Cigarette, cigar and pipe lighters may have started out as strictly utilitarian devices for igniting tobacco, but they have metamorphosed into much, much more.

Today's manufacturers offer an exceedingly wide array of choices in lighters, from inexpensive models, such as Zippo's brush chrome classic, to exotic designer products with hand-crafted engravings or gold-dusted Chinese lacquer.

Eye-catching modern lighters, some with price tags running to thousands of dollars, are viewed as fashion statements, prized ornaments, jewelry and even as objects of art.

The mechanism once thought of as a convenient, if commonplace, device for striking up a smoke has struck a chord with collectors who pursue models novel and antique. And avid fans around the world have formed international lighter clubs.

In the beginning—or at least by the 16th century—there was tobacco. But early European pipe smokers needed to set the aromatic leaf afire. For a time they used tinder boxes, an all-purpose fire starter. Tinder boxes were essentially metal boxes containing a flammable material—or tinder—and often fitted with flint and a steel striker. Banking on technology virtually unchanged since Greek and Roman times, tinder boxes did the job. But slowly. It could take up to 15 minutes to get a pipe going.

Through succeeding centuries inventors came up with new methods for lighting tobacco quickly. Some, like gun-powder percussion caps and hydrogen lamps, seem quite dangerous by modern standards. But one, the friction match, proved useful enough to survive to the present day, remaining the primary competition for mechanical lighters.

The arrival of more-or-less modern lighters, with serrated wheels and flints, the spark from which ignited fuel-soaked wicks, was held up until an invention by Baron Auer von Welsbach in 1900. The Austrian nobleman is the father of today's flint, which is not true flint at all, but an alloy of iron, magnesium and cerium.

Consumers looking for that perfect lighter might easily be overwhelmed by today's wealth of product choices. Knowing a little about the various options in lighters can help narrow the selection. Price and elegance—or simplicity—will certainly be factors in a shopper's decision, but durability and the manufacturer's warranty are also important considerations.

Don't overlook the purpose the lighter will serve. A lighter selected as a silver anniversary gift will be substantially different from one chosen for the rough-and-tumble daily use of a working man.

Lighters are, in general, fueled by either butane or lighter fluid. Most quality lighters today use butane (introduced for lighters in 1945) and lighter manufacturers usually recommend a specific brand for their products.

But one venerable lighter maker continues to rely solely on lighter fluid. Zippo, whose visual and mechanical design remains virtually unchanged since its inception in 1932, has been a favorite of soldiers and outdoorsmen for decades. Zippo evokes images of macho, no-nonsense functionality and has appeared in numerous tough-guy movies, such as "Terminator 2," "Die Hard" and "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade." It is hard to argue with success: the company has produced some 300 million lighters in an amazing variety of patterns and designs, from its $10.95 standard model to the $15,000 hand-engraved Ultimate Zippo.

There are several ignition systems on the market: the standard flint-and-striker-wheel system used by Zippo and at least two electronic ignitions. One type uses a capacitor and a step-up transformer. Another type, the piezoelectric ignition found in the Lord-03 by KGM Industries ($39.95), IM Corona's CPL II ($60.00) and other lighters, is powered by the twisting or striking of crystals.

Caveat emptor: In examining warranties, it is wise to read the fine print. Of the manufacturers responding to *P&T*, Zippo offers the best terms—a lifetime warranty. S.T. Dupont lighters carry a three-year warranty; KGM, a five-year warranty; Savinelli, which distributes the IM Corona line, offers a written one-year warranty, but in most cases will provide service on defects for an unlimited term. Colibri's warranty varies from product to product. Colibri models mentioned by *P&T* have either a one or two-year warranty.

Pipe smokers will find that most manufacturers offer lighters with specialized pipe options. Some lighters, even Hollco-Rohr's low-priced Genie Bentley ($7.50), come with built-in tampers. The stylish Old Boy Briar Natural by IM Corona ($135.00) has both tamper and pick.

The angle of a lighter's flame can be important to the pipe smoker. Some lighters, such as KGM Industries' Lord and Shenandoah models, are equipped with horizontal or 45 degree jets. Others, including Zippo, tackle the problem with pipe chimneys that allow the flame to be drawn through the side of the chimney. *P&T*

Lighters over $99

Top row from left to right:

Pipe Magie, gold plated, vertical pattern, horizontal flame by IM Corona, $100.00.*

1876, gun metal vertical pattern with gold edging and knob by IM Corona, $100.00.*

Sterling silver, engine turned with vertical pattern and initial panel ("GGB" in photo) by Zippo, $161.95.*

Old Boy Pewter, pewter with engraved pipe shape chart and built-in tamper and pick by IM Corona, $100.00.*

Second row from left to right:

Ultimate Zippo, one-of-a-kind, hand-crafted sterling silver with Owl engraving by Zippo, $15,000.*

Dunhill rollagas, black lacquer, gold trim, "D" monogram by Colibri, $485.00.*

Briquet de Poche L2, gold dust and chinese lacquer panels, gold trim and knob, "Dupont" engraving by S.T. Dupont, $930.00.*

Third row from left to right:

Briquet Cascade Bicolore, Soubreny silver with vertical waves, gold knob, by S.T. Dupont, $295.00.*

Briquet de Poche L1, silver plate with petite diamond pattern by S. T. Dupont, $235.00.*

Bottom row from left to right:

Elite Classic, limited edition, precision balanced, brass construction, gold and silver, vertical pattern with sterling silver initial plate by Calibri, $135.00.*

Old Boy Briar Natural, briar shell body with gold plate trim, built-in tamper and pick by IM Corona, $135.00.*

**All prices are suggested retail.*

Lighters under $99

Left column from top to bottom:

Brush chrome with black pipe insignia by Zippo, $11.95.*

Lord-03, ergonomically designed, horizontal flame, electronic piezo ignition, black matte with "Prometheus" monogram by KGM Industries, $39.95.*

Genie Bentley, brown matte with pipe insignia by Hollco-Rohr, $5.50.*

CPL II, gun metal with horizontal flame and emblazoned pipe shape chart by IM Corona, $60.00.*

Center column from top to bottom:

Brass regular with Octastar pattern by Zippo, $63.95.*

Gatsby-05 with gold top and bottom, black leather shaft by KGM Industries, $64.95.*

Clip Lighter, fountain pen-style with burlwood finish by Colibri, $24.95.*

Right column from top to bottom:

Classic brush chrome regular by Zippo, $10.95.*

Cyber-06, ergonomically designed, horizontal flame, black lacquer with "Prometheus" monogram by KGM Industries, $59.95.*

Genie Bentley, black matte with tamper and pipe insignia by Hollco-Rohr, $7.50.*

Shenandoah-04 with horizontal flame, black with "Prometheus" monogram and pipe insignia by KGM Industries, $49.95.*

**All prices are suggested retail.*

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flute, with laughter

The Irish brogue, still thick after years living abroad, spins the yarn of a young boy growing up in Belfast, and the road he took in becoming the most famous flutist in the world

by Dayton H. Matlick

His laugh rang throughout the lobby of the hotel, the infectious kind of laugh that causes people to pause in their own private discussions, turn their heads and smile in response; a very Irish laugh. "Why the flute? My granddad played the flute; my dad played the flute. In the district, everybody played the flute. It was like a national instrument. It played a big role in Irish traditional music," says James Galway, the most renowned flutist in the world.

Gray smoke from his pipe drifted in swirls in the bright sunlight from the tall windows near his chair; his pipe was cradled familiarly, comfortably, in his hand.

"I started on the violin, but gave it up after a while because I didn't like the instrument. And I've always had terrible trouble with my eyes. I couldn't see the music off the end of a violin. The flute was great because I could get real near the music," he says with a lighter, gentle laugh.

Galway grew up near the shipyards in Belfast, Northern Ireland, before music took him away from the Emerald Isle.

"You know, in Belfast they built the Titanic," the brogue continues. "So they had a lot of very big ships there. The propellers of these ships are huge. So for little mites like us—seven or eight years old—we could use them like a slide.

"Also, there was Fort William Park right beside my school with trails to run and berries to eat. And a railroad yard with lots of funny-looking engines to play on. And a river that runs under quite a few bridges. Some of these bridges are so low that there isn't much difference between crouching down and swimming half the time. We used to come home totally soaked, of course. We got our 'leathers' for that," he says wryly.

When Jimmy, as he refers to himself, was 10 or 11, the music started to capture him. He likens it to the pull of computers for today's kids. He and his friends would get together and swap tunes like kids swap shareware today.

Galway grew up in a family in which music played an essential part. Galway's dad, James,

Like many Irishmen, Galway grew up in a family where music was an essential part of everyday life, but for him it went further.

worked in the Harlan and Wolff shipyard and both he and his wife, Ethel, played in a small dance band. Jimmy's dad played the accordion in the band, but on weekends he would play the flute with his wife's piano. Although they didn't play classical music in the band, his father knew and taught Jimmy the melodies from the last several Mozart symphonies by singing them to him.

"It's a funny thing, whenever I hear these symphonies or read the scores, I can hear my father's voice. When you go along in life, you meet people at various stages who put another ladder in front of you to climb. My dad provided one of those early ladders, I can tell you, and a very good one. If I had my life to live over again, I wouldn't mind having the same dad."

Jimmy progressed so well that at 15 he went to the Royal College of Music in London on a two-year scholarship for underprivileged children from Northern Ireland. He excelled and the scholarship was extended by another year. From there the pace picked up. Next, the Paris Conservatory where he followed famed flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal around "like a puppy."

All along the way there were special teachers who Jimmy remembers with fondness and appreciation. For example, there was Muriel Zaun, who was a professional singer before she took up the flute. Jimmy remembers that she sang Vaughan Williams songs to Vaughan Williams, who accompanied her on the piano.

And John Francis, who taught at the Royal College of Music. Jimmy lived with John and his family, including two daughters. "John was great. I was still young when I arrived in London and it was like having a built-in father and mother. They were really good to me, including going on holidays together. And John and I would get up almost every morning at the crack of dawn and go swimming.

"John was the first person who took me to the opera and the ballet. We went to see Prince of the Pagoda ballet by Benjamin Britain. Of course, there were a lot of little girls running around half naked. And there was this little boy from Ireland saying to himself, 'Is this immoral or what?'"

His first job, which he held for about six years, was with the Sadler's Wells Opera Orchestra, followed by the Royal Opera House Orchestra and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. By the late 1960s, Galway was first flute for the London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Then, in 1969, he crossed the Channel to become first flute for the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. He performed with the Orchestra until 1975 when he started his solo career.

His debut with the Berlin Philharmonic was one of the low spots in his career. The renowned Carl Bohm was conducting Beethoven's Eroica and Jimmy was determined to show the Germans how to play Beethoven. The conductor gave a strong downbeat and Jimmy played right on the beat—all alone. The entire orchestra came in a few seconds later, to his embarrassment.

"The next day during rehearsal, all the guys were laughing, and so I asked what happened. They said, 'This is what happens, Jimmy. The conductor goes like this, but it doesn't mean that we start. Everybody watches the head of the solo cellist. When he nods, then you start.'"

Why switch to a solo career? There is no negative to playing any part in an orchestra because you are always involved in the reproduction of a masterpiece, says Galway. No matter how small the role, it is always of importance.

"In the orchestra, you are playing one essential line, but not the main line. As a soloist you are playing the main line of the whole piece. I always wanted to be the mainliner," he says with a chuckle.

Galway also points out that when you are playing solo, there are so many different ways to bring out the poetry, the virtuosity and the beauty of a piece that it makes the music more interesting.

When Galway listens to more serious type

BACKGROUND

Born: Dec. 8, 1939, in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Family: One son from first marriage; one son and twin daughters from the second marriage. Married the third time to flutist Jeanne Cinnante since 1984.

Music training: Belfast, 1951-55; Royal College of Music, London, 1955-58; Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, 1958-59; Paris Conservatory, Paris, 1959-60.

Career: In the early 1960s, played flute and piccolo in the Sadler's Wells Opera Orchestra, the Royal Opera House Orchestra and the BBC Symphony in England. In the late 1960s, played first flute with the London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Was first flute for the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, 1969-75. Began international career as soloist in 1975.

Personal selection of greatest composers: Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Bruckner.

Most challenging pieces to play: Concierto Pastoral by Joaquin Rodrigo. Pied Piper Fantasy by John Corigliano. Flute Concerto by Lowell Liebermann.

of music for his own enjoyment, he most frequently turns to composers like Siebelius, Elgar, Wagner, Pascal, Bruckner, Beethoven, Mozart and Schubert.

"Bruckner is an interesting thing, you know. If you want to listen to a Bruckner symphony, you have to get dressed up and go to the symphony hall at eight o'clock at night when the concert is being played. But I get up in the morning, sometimes around five o'clock, and put it on. Then you can see Bruckner with the sunrise, with the clouds changing, a bird singing; you can see the land, the people where the music originated.

"I listen to a lot of music early in the morning. I just put it on the CD-ROM on my computer. Nowadays you can get quite good reproduction. I just bought a new Macintosh and I'm going to fit it through my hi-fi system when I get home in December."

Galway has produced 65 recordings, videos and laser discs during his career, the vast majority of which are classical. Many are works that he himself, sometimes in conjunction with others, has commissioned. Some of the works he identifies as the most challenging for flutists are in that category, including the Concierto Pastoral by Joaquin Rodrigo, Pied Piper Fantasy by John Corgliano, and the Flute Concerto by Lowell Liebermann. Speaking of the Liebermann piece, Galway chuckles wryly as he states that "not many flutists can get their fingers around that one."

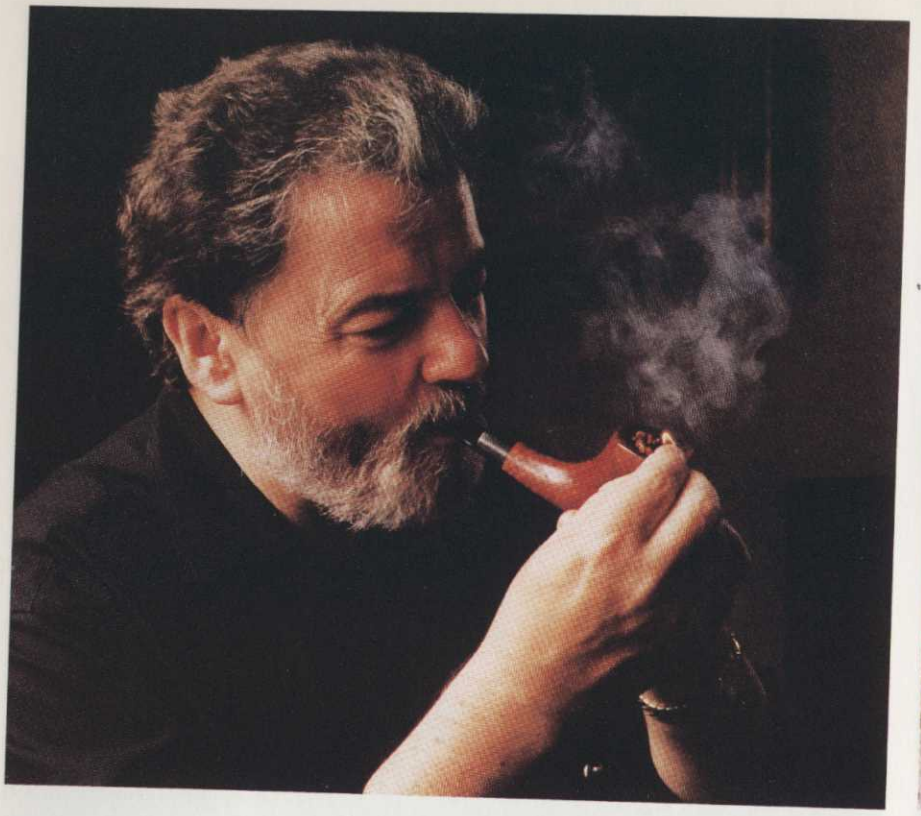
"Commissions are just something I got into. It is interesting to look around and see who the real, working composers are; the people who are really out there cutting the cake. And I just call them up and try to talk them into writing a flute concerto. The motivation is to get these big guys to write pieces we all can play. That way, future generations of flutists will have something of our time to play. An example is the Flute Concerto written by William Bolcom.

"Bolcom and I were students in Paris together. I found in my library a solo flute piece Bolcom had written for me in Paris. When he agreed to the Flute Concerto, there was a lot of talking and planning to do, including deciding on the venue where it would be introduced to the world. I gave him the old solo flute piece from my library and he incorporated it into the Concerto. Bolcom's music is sort of like reading the newspaper. There are all sorts of stuff in there of interest to everybody. It is a very good concerto.

"While we were discussing where to introduce it, Dizzy Gillespie died. We ended up commiserating about Dizzy and Bolcom wrote a bit into the Concerto called the Cigar of Beebop, or something like that.

"Dizzy was a total riot. I knew him personal-

Galway has produced more than 65 recordings in various formats. Although he is familiar to many for his more popular works, classical music makes up the vast majority of his recordings. Just after finishing this phrase in a practice session, above left, members of the North Carolina Symphony Orchestra broke out in applause.



His collection of pipes is closely tied to the people with whom he has performed, and the places he has traveled.

ly and he was a great cigar smoker. He told me once he did a gig in Cuba and Castro paid him off in Cuban cigars. Castro told him he could sell those cigars back in the States for thousands of dollars. But Dizzy smoked many of them himself. Dizzy was wonderful; a beautiful guy."

Although most of Galway's recordings are classical, there is also a strong listener following for more popular recordings with the Irish band, the Chieftans, Henry Mancini, music from movies and music composed by Eric Clapton, John Lennon, Stevie Wonder and others.

Today, Galway lives in a little town just outside Lucerne, Switzerland. When he left the Berlin Philharmonic in 1975, he and his second wife, Annie, who is Swiss, moved to Lucerne. Although he and Annie parted ways after 11 years, he continues to make the little town of Meggen, outside Lucerne, home with third wife Jeannie, an American from Long Island who is also a professional flutist. They met in a flute class being run by Galway's friend, Julius Baker, solo flutist for years with the New York Philharmonic.

One of his few hobbies is his acre of flowers, which is a big garden in Switzerland. His needs for edible products are largely met by his neighbors, the Hoffers. Between fresh vegetables from sisters Bertha and Aloise Hoffer and fresh and smoked fish from other Hoffers, the Galways eat well.

"The healthiest thing I ever did was move to my little village of Meggen. Of course, when you get sick there, it is very hard to get cured. You go to the doctor and he asks, 'Well, how long have you had this?' 'About two weeks,' I say. 'Well, maybe it will go away,'" Galway relates with another infectious laugh.

The flutist has four children from his first two marriages, including twin daughters, both of whom perform in their separate rock bands. "The two of them are vegetarians. Greenpeace up to the ears. They never buy new clothes because they find everything they want lying around. It's a total panic."

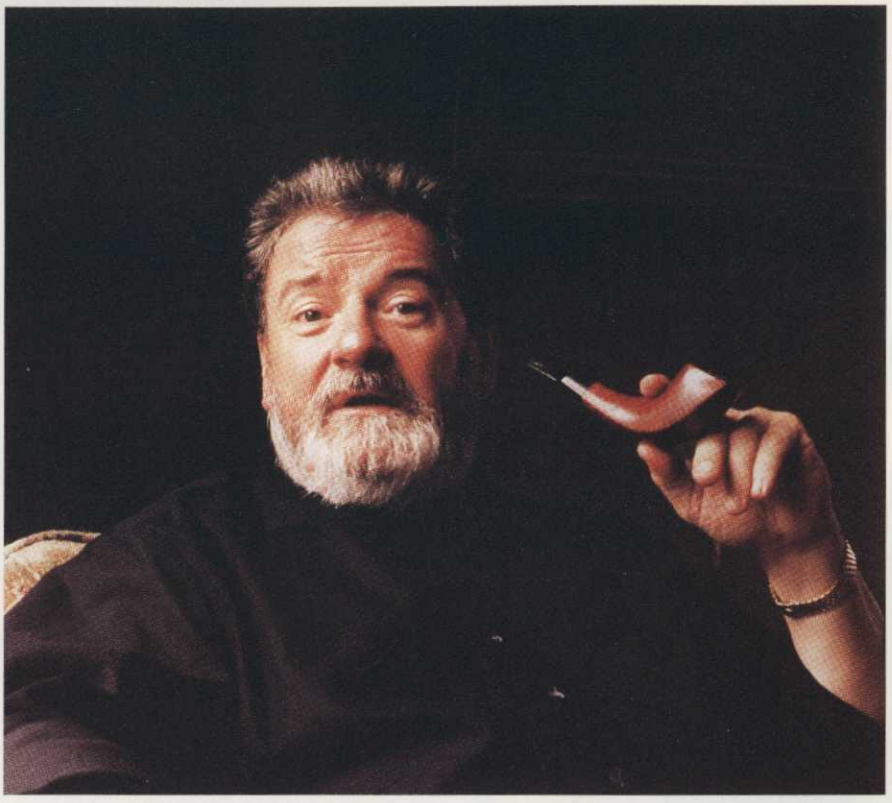
Son Patrick recently started an Internet café where patrons can drink coffee while surfing the Internet. The other son installs windows in the London area.

Many of Galway's travels and experiences are reflected in his collection of about 75 pipes. For example, there is his Vivaldi pipe, which he bought right around the corner from Vivaldi's church. It is an Italian pipe by Savinelli.

"I was about 25 years old when I first got interested in pipes," relates Galway. "We had this old manager of the orchestra and he used to smoke a pipe all the time. I said, 'Charlie, let me try this pipe.' So I tried the pipe and it nearly burned my mouth right off. In spite of that, I was fascinated, bought my own pipe, and started experimenting with tobaccos."

He later gave up the pipe and cigarettes for eight years. This changed when he was doing a concert in Stockholm. The conductor was smoking a pipe and it smelled so good! Galway says he was walking behind him like a dog sniffing it. He bought a pipe and has been smoking pipes ever since, but no more cigarettes. In 1981, he was named "Pipe Smoker of the Year" in a ceremony in the U.K.

The first pipe he owned was a Camoy, pri-



marily because the Camoy factory was right down the road from where he was working for the Sadler's Wells Opera Orchestra. "The local shops all had pipes that 'fell off the back of the lorry.'"

He prefers bent-shape, Sherlock Holmes-style pipes, partially because they put less stress on his teeth; partially because he just likes the way they look.

"I got rid of some of my pipes, but many of the ones I have left have sentimental value. For example, Henry Mancini gave me several nice pipes. Two are Charatans. And when I was made pipe smoker of the year, Sheraton made me a fantastic pipe. Dunhill gave me one in the shape of a piccolo.

"One of the tobaccos I like to smoke is Erinmore. When I went to school, most of the girls worked in the Erinmore factory and smelled of Erinmore—a sweet, fruity smell. And there was Red Rapparee (No. 7). I try some of the flavored tobaccos when I come to America because I can always find a tobacco shop. But in Lucerne, my local tobacco shop has its own mixture. It is a very good mixture. It should probably be banned. Once you start smoking it, you smoke about a ton of it."

But smoking a pipe is not without some dangers. Galway was recording in Switzerland with the Tokyo String Quartette some years ago. Between sessions, they were walking together down a street in a small village, Galway smoking on his pipe. Then he put it into his pocket. A few minutes later, he felt a terrible pain on his leg. "I thought, damn, my pants are on fire! I just, in the middle of the street, took off my pants, because they were burning, you know. It was a little village and there was no one around. But, being a typical Japanese, one of the guys had his camera and recorded the event for posterity."

Pipe smoking, in a way, almost dictates the kind of clothes worn. For example, says Galway, a pipe smoker buys a coat with five million pockets so he can shove pipes all over it. Jeannie is well aware of this and knows exactly what sort of coat he is going to buy.

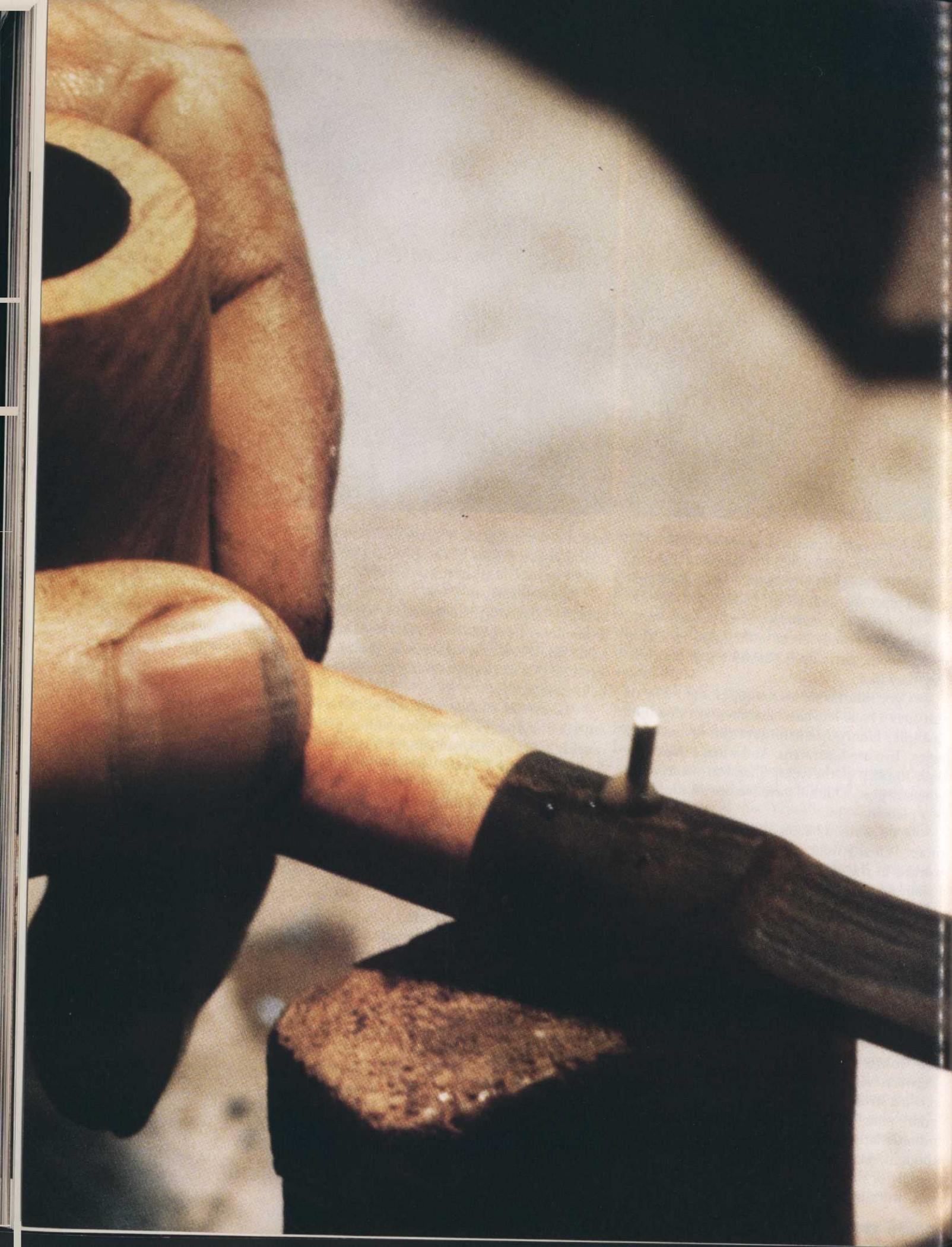
Accessories take up very few of those pockets. He lit his pipe with matches, although he frequently uses a lighter, and tamped it with his forefinger. Cleaning is done with (you guessed it) a Swiss Army knife.

Long years ago, Jimmy and Jeannie decided that their home would be both "no smoking" and "no shoes." When they lived in an apartment, he and smoking guests would step out onto the balcony to smoke. "This was a riot, because my neighbor Walter smoked and he would invite my guests in to smoke and offer them a glass of champagne. It's funny, I could always smell Walter on Sunday. He smoked a pipe with a Dunhill mixture. I could smell the Latakia. I think of Walter when I smell it."

In their house today, Galway has his room, a study/studio, in which he smokes, but the rest of the house is still off-limits.

From a physically exhausting schedule of 130 concerts a year, the 56-year-old virtuoso has cut back to about 60 a year. And he has begun adding some conducting to his repertoire. But, wherever his art takes him, you can bet there are some bent pipes, bags of tobacco, a lighter and a Swiss Army knife along for the trip. *P&T*

For more than 30 years, Galway has enjoyed his pipes. When he travels, he is accompanied by his pipes, tobaccos, a Swiss army knife and a good right forefinger for tamping.



dunhill

Sculpting a Pipe Legend

A concentration on making the finest possible briar pipes sold on a principal of "confident pricing"

by Dayton H. Matlick

Alfred Dunhill was born September 30, 1872, with an overwhelming and abiding interest in the new and different. Throughout his life he had to be one of the first to have and use almost any new product or gadget. This trait had an impact on his entire business career.

For example, shortly after he took over his father's harness business in 1893, he decided the future would lie with the noisy, smelly, exotic machines known as automobiles that were just appearing on London's streets.

Soon he was trading as Dunhill's Motorities. He made and sold accessories of all kinds, including a special pipe with a windshield carved onto the bowl to protect tobacco from the wind generated by an open car.

After disagreements with others at Motorities, Dunhill left the company and opened a tobacconist shop in 1907. The automotive industry's loss became the tobacco industry's gain.

Several factors inherent in Dunhill's view of life and business contributed greatly to his success. In addition to his abiding interest in the new and different, he also had an uncompromising sense of quality, a talent for unique promotions for his company and his products, and an ability to respond to the times.

"When Alfred Dunhill opened his shop in Duke Street, St. James' (in London), he knew little about the tobacco trade and eagerly learnt from the comments his customers made," says grandson Richard Dunhill, president of Dunhill Holdings PLC and chairman of Alfred Dunhill Ltd.

"He also came to realize that pipes available from manufacturers fell far short of his concept of quality. He therefore opened a small factory in 1910 to make his own pipes; he offered them at about double the prices of other makers. This success is now history."

Dunhill's choice of his new shop showed a keen awareness of the importance of proper location. He chose Duke Street because of his determination to be a high-class supplier of tobacco blends, cigars, cigarettes and smokers' "requisites" to gentlemen.

His entry into the company of tobacconists took place near, if not on, his 35th birthday.

Having decided to make his own pipes, he set two directions that are still part of Dunhill Pipes Limited today. First, he concentrated on making the finest possible briar pipes. Second, he used a marketing principle of "confident pricing." It was based on his belief that a product of outstanding quality will sell at a high price when marketed effectively.

The famous "white spot" was introduced soon after the pipe-making factory was moved in 1912 from its second-floor location on Duke

Principles set by Alfred Dunhill in 1910 for pipe making continue in effect today.

Creative selling made Dunhill pipes a world-wide reputation by the end of WWI.

Street to 6 Mason's Square, about 40 yards down Duke Street on the left.

The problem was that customers couldn't tell which way to insert the handmade vulcanite mouthpieces of straight pipes into the pipe stems. As a practical solution, Dunhill ordered the white spots to be placed on the upper sides of the mouthpieces. In that way, what was to become a world-famous trademark was the byproduct of expediency.

A prime example of Dunhill's unique promotional abilities comes from World War I, as told by Dunhill's grandson Richard:

"Many of our customers were officers serving in the trenches in northern France. Whenever orders were received for a Dunhill pipe, Alfred sent off a box of 12 of them with a note suggesting that the others be offered to fellow officers. Invariably all of them were sold, and not only to the British, but also to many other nationalities serving in France, including Americans, Canadians, French and Belgians.

"Such a box would also contain a roll of toilet tissue with a note that it might come in useful," says Richard. "The box was sealed with a label reading 'Castor Oil.' We had no pilferage! Thus, by the end of the war in 1918, the Dunhill pipe was known worldwide."

The successful inclusion of gift items in stores that had previously been devoted solely to tobacco products and accessories took place almost by accident. After expanding to New York and then to Paris in 1924, the company had not been aware of the control imposed by the French tobacco monopoly.

Unable to sell their own tobacco products in Paris, the new manager filled the partially empty shelves with gift items such as china, glass and lacquerware. The idea worked so well that it spread to other Dunhill stores.

Today, Dunhill Holdings PLC, a subsidiary of Rothman's, is made up of Alfred Dunhill Ltd., Montblanc, Chloe, Hackett and Karl Lagerfeld. Alfred Dunhill Ltd., in turn, has five product divisions: menswear (fashions), leather, jewelry (including watches and lighters), fragrances and smokers' products.

In its earlier days, Alfred Dunhill Ltd. received 95 percent of its profits from smoking products and five percent from its other activities. Today that distribution is reversed.

In 1977, Dunhill Pipes Limited was formed. It included a Plaistow factory in Cumberland Road, where Dunhill pipes were made, and the Parker Hardcastle factory at Walthamstow, where lower-priced pipes were made and the headquarters was located. Another pipe factory, Charatans, remained autonomous.

In March 1982, Dunhill pipe manufacturing ceased at Plaistow and was transferred to the

The functional white dot on Dunhill mouthpieces became a world-renowned trademark. The first steps involve drilling a hole in the mouthpiece and inserting a rod of white plastic in place. The plastic is then clipped off, upper left. Glue is applied and the small plastic rod is tapped firmly in place, lower left. Finally, the rod is carefully sanded and buffed until it becomes the famous white dot trademark.

Walthamstow premises at 32 St. Andrews Road, E 17, London, where pipes continue to be manufactured today, despite continuing rumors to the contrary.

It takes both subway and train to travel from downtown London to the northeast outskirts called Walthamstow. The stop for Dunhill was only one or two miles from the forests outside the city.

"Over the past three or four years, the pipe market has been polarized in the U.S.," says General Manager Robin Philpott in the factory's display room just inside the main entrance. "There is buoyant activity in high-end pipes and also in the bargain-basement end of the business. The middle range—$35 to $90—is the hardest to sell in the States.

"However, the American market seems to be rising. This is good to see after the previous couple of years.

"Also, there has been a trend toward more conservative shapes for us. But, then, we're known for classic, conservative shapes," says Philpott. "We do 40 to 50 different shapes, but 80 percent of our sales are in only eight of these. The billiard and the bent billiard are two of our best sellers.

"Cigars and tobacco accessories have also been a growth area for us in recent years. This includes leather pouches, tampers, cigar cases, humidors, cutters and a wide variety of other products," says Philpott.

One-third of the factory space is devoted to making mouthpieces.

About 50 people man the offices, warehouse and pipe factory in Walthamstow. Dunhill Pipes Limited operates as a separate entity within Alfred Dunhill Ltd. in most things. Of its employees, about 15 work full time making pipes.

Turnover in the factory is low. The person with the shortest time on the job has been employed there for 14 years. The 15 full-time employees boast a cumulative 260 years of experience in making pipes by hand.

Steve Wilson, supervisor of the Dunhill pipe factory, grew almost poetic as he guided the one-man tour through the spacious, well-lighted factory attached behind the offices.

The first stop was a stack of briar at the very back of the shop, each waiting to be tested to see if it can become a Dunhill pipe.

Briar comes from the roots of a Mediterranean shrub (*Erica arborea*). The upper part of the root sometimes develops a "burl" or enlargement. Over the years it grows quite large and very hard. Most of the briar used by Dunhill is from bushes 100 years old.

The wood of the "burl" is well-grained, pinkish-brown in color and very dense. "It's a very hard wood," says Wilson. "If burned, it would turn red and glow like coke."

Although good briar is becoming hard t get, Dunhill Pipes is finding a reliable source this time from Corsica. The trouble is findin experienced people who will still go out and di it. As a result, the price for briar is going up.

The first step once a piece of briar i selected is to look at the grain in the block o briar in order to decide how to shape the pipe A saw is used then to create the rough shape o the pipe.

There is no way to know when a flaw ma become exposed—early in the process or in th final stage.

Because of the exacting standards, only on to three briar bowls out of every 100 piece carved is good enough to carry the Dunhil name. Roughly 88 to 89 of the bowls that don' make the grade (failings) are finished out unde other trade names, such as Parker, Hardcastl and private labels. The others are discarded.

A lathe and chisel are used to round the bowl and stem. Then the inside of the bowl is smoothed with sandpaper. The smoother the bowl, the longer the pipe will burn, says Wilson. This is followed by the first of many quality checks.

The craftsman must then drill the hole for the stem. Because the hole is drilled under pressure, the stem expands and the resulting hole isn't round. This results in the necessity for Dunhill craftspersons to hand make each mouthpiece specifically for its bowl. The two pieces are joined early in the process and never separated.

(It's also the reason why you can't just order a new mouthpiece for a Dunhill pipe through the mail without sending in the bowl for proper fitting.)

One-third of the factory space is devoted to the different processes involved in making mouthpieces.

Today's mouthpieces are made of vulcanite, just as were the ones originally made by founder Alfred Dunhill. Vulcanite is a combination of rubber and sulfur.

A tungsten-carbide-tipped hand tool is used to do the first rough cut of the mouthpiece. It is then shaped and finished by hand with a series of rasps.

Then a six-sided tool is required to cut the slot in the mouthpiece. The slot is V-shaped to allow the smoke to spread out and cool in the curve. The V-shape is also strong and resists damage from biting.

It is at this stage that a hole is drilled and the plastic rod inserted that creates the famous white dot trademark.

With the general shaping done, many additional steps are involved in further shaping and smoothing the bowl, stem and mouthpiece. The

materials used include sandpaper of a wide variety of grits, pumice (volcanic ash), oil, stain and wax.

An oven that reaches 360 degrees Fahrenheit is used to heat the mouthpieces to a desired temperature. Then the mouthpieces are bent into the proper shape and allowed to cool. It is the nature of vulcanite that it will keep that shape until the mouthpiece once again reaches 360 degrees.

(Note: Keep pipes out of extreme heat. Also avoid sunlight because it can oxidize and discolor the beautiful finish on a vulcanite mouthpiece.)

Then the bowls are buffed and stained with methylated spirits. Because no two pieces of wood are the same, a craftsperson decides individually how many coats of stain are required for each bowl.

After staining, the pipes are "flamed" to eliminate extra stain, creating a green appearance. The pipe is then examined closely, followed by at least eight buffings.

The next step is to clean the inside of the bowl and mouthpiece in preparation for final polishing.

The pipe is then stamped by hand. The metal stamp presses information into the pipe that identifies the shape and the finish, a code number to indicate the year of manufacture, and "made in England."

The final finish is achieved using carnauba wax. The wax is rubbed on by hand and then polished...and polished some more.

"When handling a 'virgin' pipe, put your finger or thumb in the bowl and not on it," says Wilson. "That way the heat and acids from your hand won't affect the carnauba finish."

An additional step is required earlier in the process to produce a textured finish. To accomplish this effect, the bowl is sandblasted to remove some of the softer wood between the harder grains.

Each step in the six-week-long process is done by hand—some with machine assistance, but many steps done by hand only. More than 90 steps are required in the process that remains remarkably similar to that established by Alfred Dunhill in the early 1900s.

The efficiency of the system results from the founder's early division of the manufacturing process into stages: picking and grading bowls, mopping and oiling, stoving, bowl flaw detection, mouthpiece fitting, frazing and filing, pumicing, stamping and, finally, finishing and final examination.

The result of this almost fanatical attention to detail and quality is a Dunhill pipe—recognized throughout the world as a possession to be prized, cherished...and enjoyed! ***P&T***

After staining, a worker exposes the pipe to an open flame (top). Fire immediately covers the whole pipe, eliminating all extra stain. Near the end of the more than 90 steps required to make a Dunhill pipe, the pipe is stamped by hand (bottom) with information that identifies the shape and finish, a code number to indicate year of manufacture and "Made in England."

Viennese Meerschaum

Winning top World Fair honors in 1873, this exquisite meerschaum pipe is an example of the best in craftsmanship

by Herbert Rupp

Beginning in the early 19th century, Vienna, Austria, was the international center of meerschaum carving. Pipes made of that noble material in this historic capital city of the Austro-Hungarian Empire stood above all others in both design and artistic creativity.

Meerschaum pipes of fine Viennese workmanship were recognized as exclusive objects of prestige due to their unique quality. For this reason, they usually won the most important World Fair awards.

The Grosse Wiener Meerschaumpfeife (Large Vienna Meerschaum Pipe), from the collection of the Austrian Tobacco Museum in Vienna, is a typical example of this kind of rare pipe.

This magnificently carved pipe bowl was created in 1873 on the occasion of the Vienna World Fair.

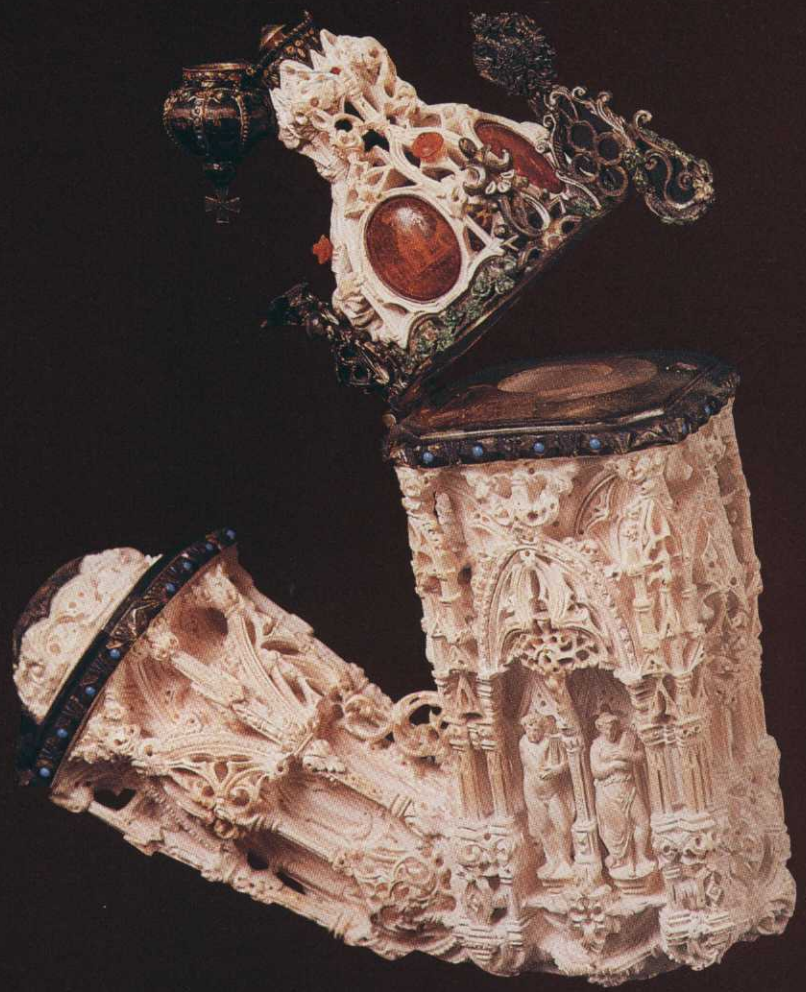
The Vienna World Fair resulted from the development of new economic systems, with more than 7 million visitors attending. However, a different view of the Fair was recorded by Countess Marie Festetics: "Nowadays, life is an exciting dream!!! The World Fair seems to be like a purgatory, swallowing up all interests and leaving desires for pleasure only. This is rather appalling...."

Neither the collapse of the stock market on "Black Friday," a few days after the Fair's inauguration, nor an epidemic of cholera in the summer of 1873 could impair the glorious impression of this immense six-month long show. It brought the former Imperial metropolis of Vienna into the focus of universal interest.

Beginning in the 1840s, the emphasis on historically styled architecture had grown more and more important in this capital city. Then, Emperor Franz-Joseph declared that the defensive walls around the inner city would be torn

More than 7 million visitors attended the six-month long World Fair, the event of the century, held in the Imperial capital, Vienna.

Each view of this magnificent pipe reveals new details and further examples of the fine craftsmanship and art. Photos are provided by the Austrian Tobacco Museum.



The artist combined meerschaum with gold, turquoise, enamel, and even a diamond, to create the pipe's stunning impact.

down and replaced with the famous Ringstrasse, or ring street. This street now circles the heart of the older part of the city, including the Hofburg (the Imperial Winter Palace), the Vienna State Opera, St. Stephen's Cathedral and the famous pedestrian shopping street, Kartner Strasse.

The resulting building frenzy from 1860 through 1890 became the greatest town-planning project of the age. Many of the new buildings, including several churches and other epoch-making buildings, were done in the gothic style. In 1873, when the Vienna World Fair was inaugurated, the New Vienna Town Hall (Rathaus), the masterpiece of Friedrich von Schmidt, was under construction. It generously combined gothic and renaissance elements.

Obviously the different elements of this historic construction period influenced all other branches of art accordingly. The inspiration of that time resulted in many remarkable pieces of fine workmanship, exposed during the Vienna World Fair. Part of this inspiration resulted in a combination of functional purposes and graceful design.

This is epitomized by the strong gothic elements of the Grosse Wiener Meerschaumpfeife. The marvelous carving shows four allegoric figures under arcades, symbolizing Art, Science, Trade and Technology.

It was common to combine meerschaum with other precious materials. Accordingly, the inside gold-plated pipe lid is decorated with amber, turquoise and enamel ornaments.

The masterpiece measures approximately 10 inches (25.5 cm) from the top of the crown on the lid to its base, 10 1/2 inches (27 cm) from the front to the tip of the stem, and 2 1/3 inches in diameter. The ornate lid is 4 1/2 inches (11.5 cm) in height. It is a true example of the combination of art and craftsmanship.

Illustrations of the Imperial arms, the Imperial Pavilion and the "Rotunde," the most important iron-constructed, circle-shaped exhibition

hall of the World Fair, appear under three of the four medallions of amber. The fourth bears the signature, "J.N. Menhard Wien." Menhard was a renowned Viennese producer of meerschaum and amber articles. His participation in the Vienna World Fair and his creation of this unique pipe resulted in his decoration with the World Fair Medal of Merit.

The elaborately gothic-styled mounting is made of silver and decorated with enamel ornamentation. It fits the pipe perfectly.

Symbols of the Imperial might are represented in three-dimensional figures made of silver: Eagle, Crown and the Austrian Imperial Arms. When the crown is lifted, a hidden diamond can be seen.

At the end of the 1873 Vienna World Fair, the Grosse Wiener Meerschaumpfeife, together with other elaborately carved show pipes and unique smoking requisites, was handed over to the Imperial and Royal Tobacco Company (K.u.k. Oesterreichische Tabakregie), precursor of the present company, Austria Tabak, a national tobacco monopoly now facing privatization.

Since that time, an already existing small collection of objects related to tobacco and its history has been expanded systematically throughout the years. For this reason, 1873 is considered to be the foundation year of the Austrian Tobacco Museum and its world famous collection.

When in Vienna, a stop at the Museum, located at Osterreichische Tabakmuseum, Mariahilfer Strasse 2, Vienna 7; telephone: Vienna 526-1716, is a definite must for pipe smokers from all over the world. It has a total of 8,000 tobacco-related objects, with approximately 3,000 items on display. Current hours of availability are: Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday, Sunday and holidays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. ***P&T***

Dr. Herbert Rupp is director of the Austrian Tobacco Museum.

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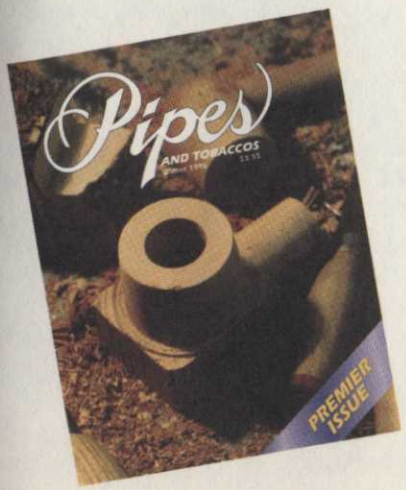

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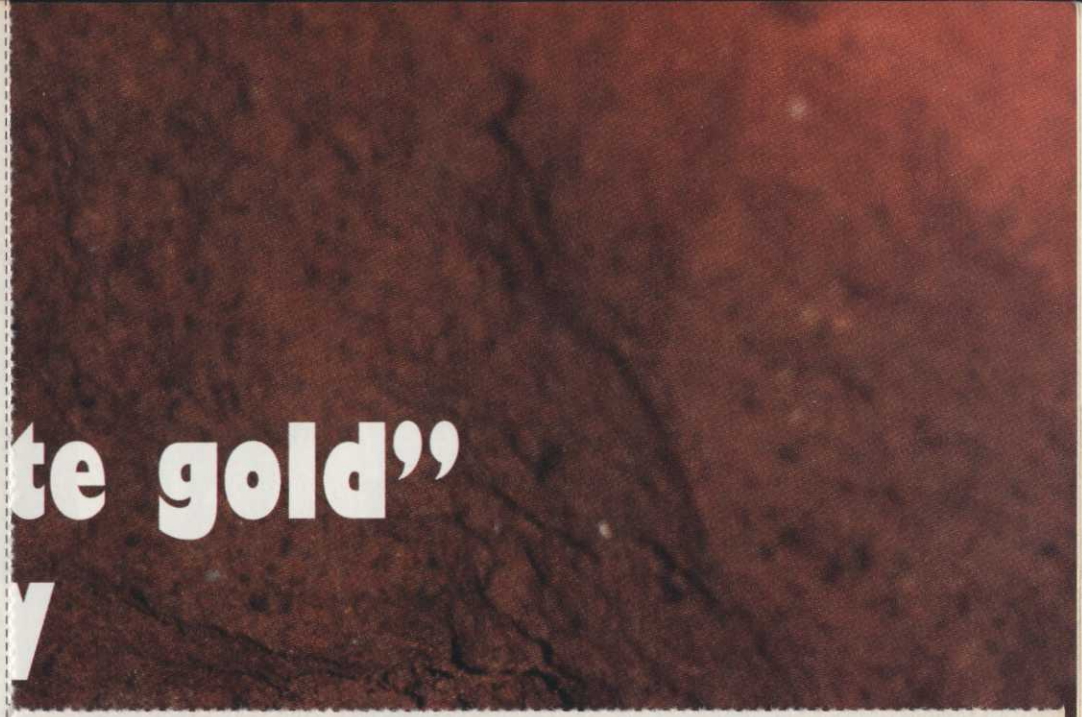

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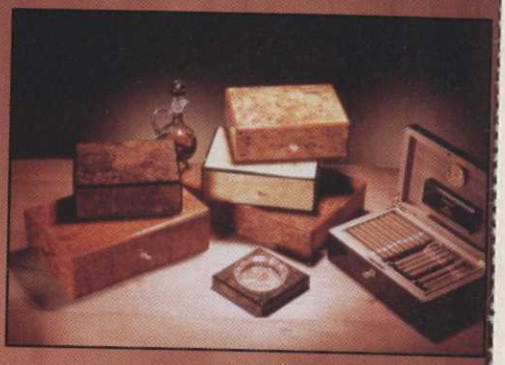

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Mining for "white gold" in Turkey

Formed of fossilized, prehistoric sea crustaceans that lived millions of years ago, meerschaum is a treasured pipe material

by Lars Hundley

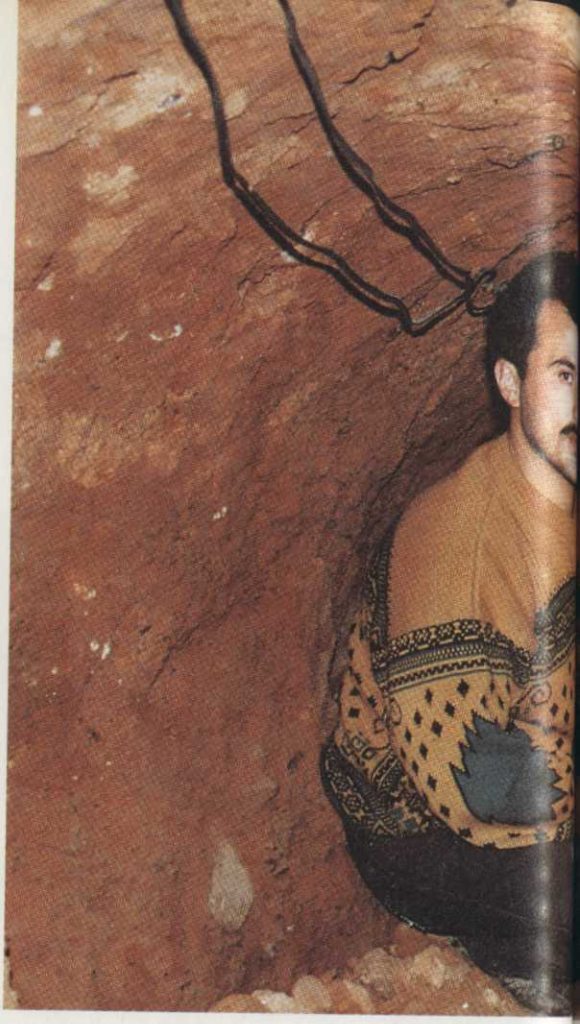
By the way, you aren't claustrophobic, are you?" Claustrophobic? Red flags waved frantically in my brain. Don't do it! Sounds dangerous! But this was the publisher, the source of my paycheck.

"Not that I know of," I replied. "Why do you ask?"

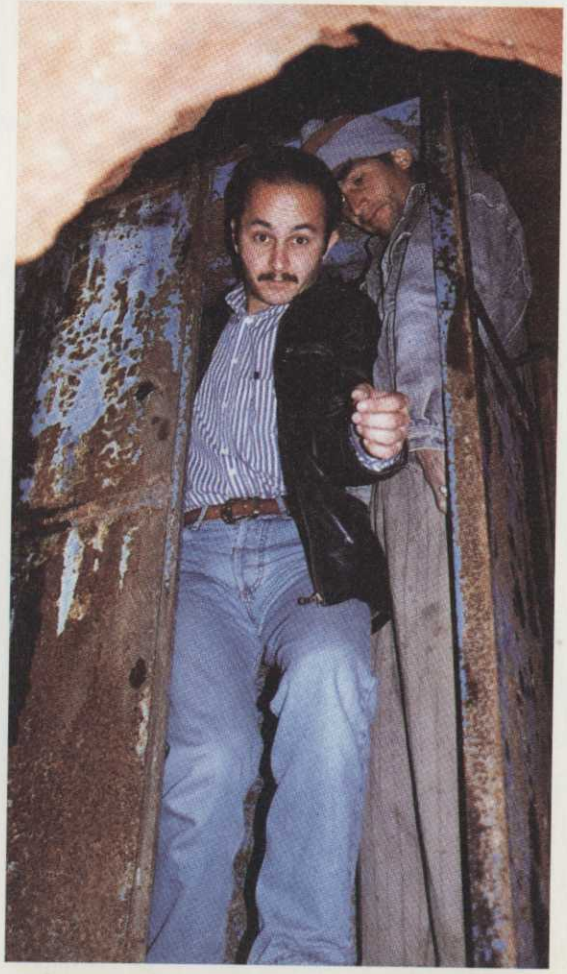
The answer to that question soon had me planning a bus trip from Izmir, Turkey, where I was working on a different story, to Eskisehir, east of Istanbul, in search of meerschaum mines. Meerschaum is a soft, white stone used for centuries to make fine, carved pipes, among other things. And the mines near Eskisehir are the only source of high-quality meerschaum in the world.

A quick phone call to my contact, Ismet Bekler, confirmed what my publisher had already told me, namely that Bekler only spoke Turkish. With the help of a woman at the reception desk of my hotel, a second call confirmed that he knew who I was, and that he'd have an interpreter there when I arrived.

If you take a bus in the States, you're pretty much limited to a choice between Trailways and Greyhound. But bus stations in Turkey offer a wonderfully confusing array of about 20 different bus companies—each with its own ticket desk and a colorful sign with a list of destinations. The more aggressive companies have runners who meet you at the door and try to lead you to their desk. As I walked into the station, three different guys



Getting down into a meerschaum mine is a daunting experience for the uninitiated.



approached me asking, "Istanbul?" Where else would a Westerner like me want to go, right?

When I answered that I was looking for a bus to Eskisehir, two of the runners shook their heads and disappeared, but the third motioned for me to follow him and led me to a ticket counter.

Kamil Coach bus line was happy to take me where I was going, and the next bus left in half an hour. The seven-hour bus trip would cost 500,000 Turkish lira. I punched a few keys on my calculator and saw that it was only $10.

Despite the ludicrously low price, the Kamil Coach bus was quite new, and spotless. No bathroom, but hey, you can't have everything. The trip itself was long. Really long. The terrain was similar to southeastern New Mexico—a few hills, lots of scrub brush and not much else.

When I finally arrived in Eskisehir that evening, I took a taxi to the hotel that Bekler had recommended. There, my interpreter, a 24-year-old college student named Serdal Bektas, was waiting for me in the lobby. Like students everywhere, he dressed casually, with jeans and a black leather jacket. With dark eyes and hair, and the ubiquitous mustache that Turkish men wear, he appeared eager to start.

That's when I discovered that he would be interpreting into German, not English. Evidently, English speakers are hard to come by in Eskisehir. Fortunately, I speak German, so it wasn't a problem.

Bektas explained that we'd meet Mr. Bekler the next morning, and he'd take us to one of the meerschaum mines outside the city.

Then he shuffled his feet a bit, coughed, and brought up the subject of paying him for his services. "Sure, no problem," I told him. "How much do you charge?"

"You see, in Turkey, we're supposed to negotiate a price," he explained amiably enough. "You're supposed to tell me how much you want to pay, and we negotiate from there."

I was on the spot. I didn't want to insult the guy by offering too little, but I also didn't want to offer too much and look like a sucker.

"How does 2 million ($40) sound?" I asked, using a special method of mathematical calculation I learned in graduate school, sometimes referred to in layman's terms as "pure guesswork."

"I was thinking more along the lines of 4 million," he replied, using his own method, known as "ask for a whole lot and see if he says yes." We settled for 3 million and arranged the time to begin.

The next morning, the interpreter met me in the lobby of the hotel, and we took a taxi into town to meet Bekler. At that point I still didn't even know how Bekler was involved with meerschaum. It turns out that he's a world-famous master pipe carver whose work is well-known to pipe smokers and collectors throughout the United States.

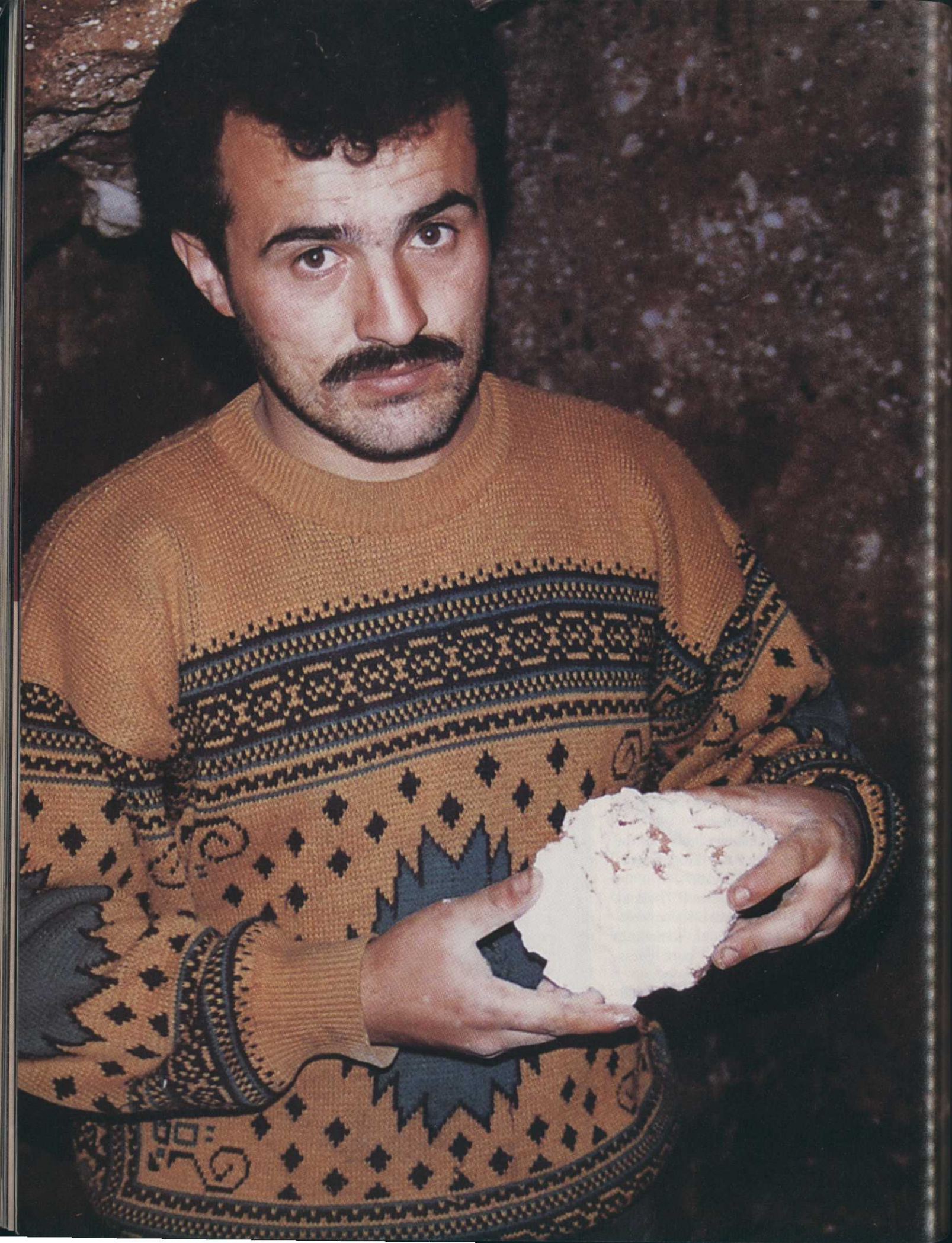
Bekler, a distinguished looking, gray-templed fellow in his 60s, showed me his tiny shop, located on a side street in the middle of Eskisehir. Inside the plate glass front window of the store was a basic setup. The store was empty, except for five separate bird cages, each containing a single canary (so those were the strange noises I had heard in the background on the phone!) and a small fish tank. Spread out on his desk were some of the pipes that he'd carved (watch future issues for a story about his pipe carving). After some questions, it was time to drive out to the meerschaum mines. Bekler knew one of the mine owners who would show us his operation. So I climbed into a car with Bekler, the interpreter, the interpreter's schoolmate, who had decided to tag along, and a driver.

We drove about 20 minutes outside of Eskisehir to a village called Beyazaltin, which, translated into English, means "White Gold." There, along the hillsides, was a six-mile stretch of land that holds the only known deposits of high-quality meerschaum in the world.

As we drove into the sparse village, one of the buildings even had a huge pipe painted on its wall. The driver turned onto a dirt road that led into what looked more like a farmhouse than a mining operation. Indeed, several sheep and a couple of chickens scattered as we drove up.

As we climbed out of the car, a man in his late

The meerschaum mine tour started (upper left) with artist Ismet Bekler and mine owner Avni Aktas. Interpreter Serdal Bektas emerges from the mine's small metal elevator (lower left), designed to fit an access shaft originally built only for climbing. Zafer Can Aktas kneels to give some idea of the height of the horizontal shafts that have to be traveled. A final descent on log ladders (right) led to an active mining area.



50s, wearing a sweater and tinted glasses, stepped out of the front door of the house and came to meet us. He spoke with Bekler for a few minutes, and then the interpreter introduced him as Avni Aktas, the mine owner.

I followed the owner away from the house and over toward a small, white cinderblock shed that was one of two separate entrances to the mine. One entrance was for the miners, and the other to bring up the meerschaum.

I started to ask a few questions about meerschaum mining, but it was clear that Aktas was in a big hurry to send me underground. After each answer the interpreter would tell me that the owner wanted to know if I was ready to go in the mine yet.

I did get a few facts, however. Meerschaum itself is formed of prehistoric sea crustaceans that were compressed for millions of years until they formed the white, lightweight stone. Why it is found only in one small area near Eskisehir is something that "only God knows," Aktas said. (Actually, a slightly different variety of meerschaum does come from Africa, but the quality is not considered to match that of Turkish meerschaum.)

When asked if there is any danger of exhausting the supply of meerschaum, he shook his head with an air of great confidence. No worries there. I could sense pipe smokers around the globe breathing a collective sigh of relief.

Aktas maintained that I was looking at the most advanced meerschaum mine in the world.

"My family worked here, and I inherited it," he said. His family has owned the mine for 200 years. His mine is equipped with water pumps, electric lighting and an elevator.

I was standing above a six-level mine that was 120 meters deep (just under 400 feet) at its lowest level. At full capacity, 30 to 40 miners can work underground, digging out meerschaum with picks.

About half of the workers at the Aktas mine are family members. Miners work from October through April, because groundwater fills the mine during the rest of the year. From May through September, people around the village often switch to farm work.

Aktas explained that a mine worker usually earns about $20 a day—which is considered to be good wages for that area. The owner purportedly makes about $200 a day when the mine is in full operation.

Next, it was time to descend. As we walked over and I got my first look at the "elevator," my stomach sank. What I saw was a cramped, rusty metal box connected by a cable to an electric wench.

Only two people could fit in the "elevator" at once, and my interpreter asked if I'd like him to go down first, since one of the miners would take up the other spot.

Did he really think that I was going to let him go down first so that I could leave the miners with a story about the American journalist who was scared to go down in their mine? Not a chance. I insisted that I'd go down first.

"OK," he said, and shrugged. "There's an intercom at the bottom, so if we hear you scream, we can send the elevator back down to get you."

This was supposed to reassure me?

I climbed into the tiny metal box, crammed up against one of the miners—Zafer Can Aktas—a young guy who also happens to be the owner's son.

"Be careful to keep your arms and legs inside," the interpreter told me. He didn't have to worry.

The mine owner pulled a lever, and we began our descent straight down into the earth. What I hadn't quite expected was the darkness after we went down about 10 feet. Total, complete, can't-see-your-hand-in-front-of-your-face darkness.

The descent lasted four minutes, but seemed a lot longer. Halfway down, my companion lit up a smoke, allowing me to momentarily see the dirt walls rising up as we descended, and then only the glowing ember of his cigarette.

Finally, I saw light as we approached the bottom of the mine. We climbed out of the "elevator" into a small tunnel that looked like it had been dug by escaping prisoners.

I glanced briefly around at the cramped confines, took a careful breath and slowly exhaled. "I guess I'm not claustrophobic," I thought to myself. "Good thing."

The electric lighting consisted of a single bare bulb connected to what must have been the longest extension cord I've ever seen. The mine owner's son walked up to the intercom—which appeared to be a converted baby monitor from the 1970s. He pressed the talk button and yelled something in Turkish, and the elevator began to rise without us. The point of no return.

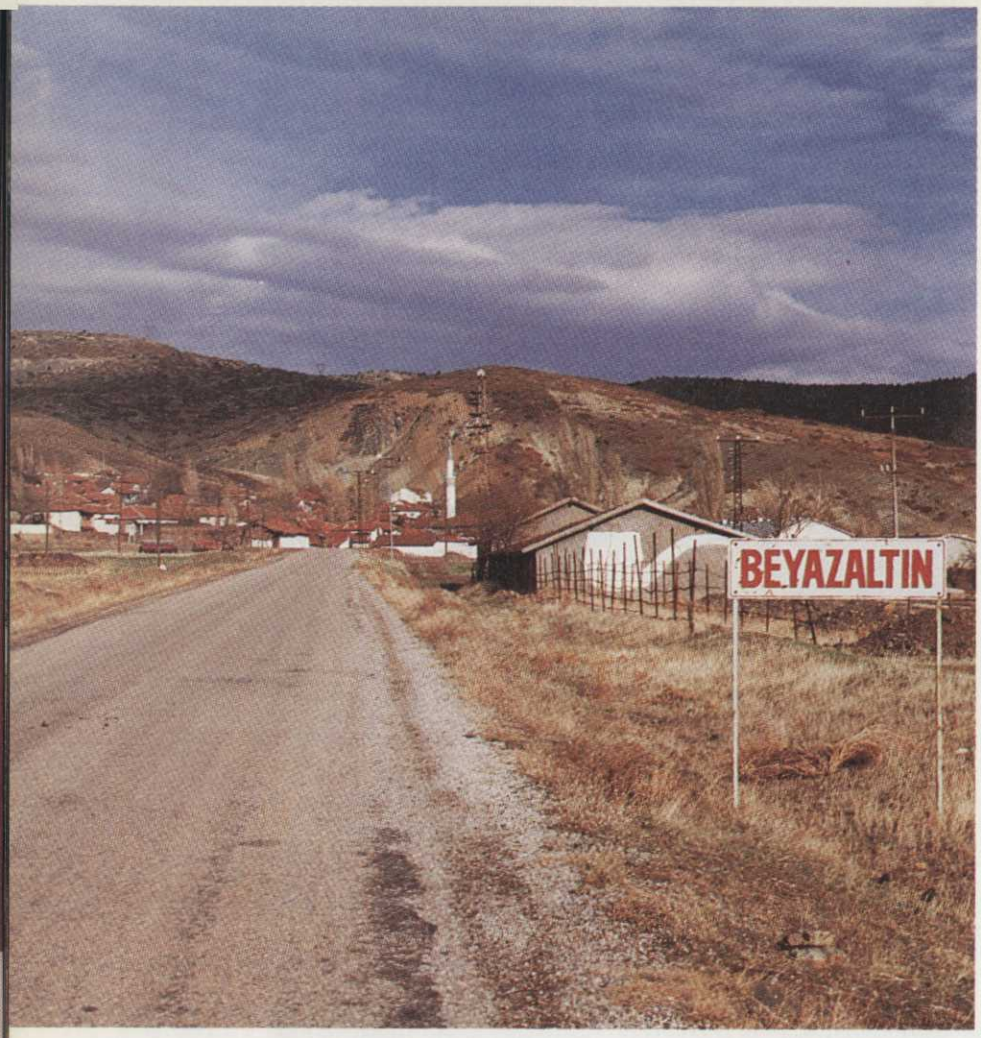
It took another 10 or 15 minutes to get everyone else down into the tunnel. Looking over the dirt-stained reporter's notebook that I took down with me, I see my barely legible first impressions. "Cold as hell—pitch black descent—red dirt."

It was freezing. It had been cold above ground, but the entrance where we sat waiting drew a chilly breeze from the surface, making it feel even colder than above.

When everyone was below, we headed down the tunnel, forced to walk stooped-over because of the 4-foot ceilings. We stopped a couple of times as the two miners pointed out bits of meerschaum embedded in the walls. The red dirt made it look extremely white. This was lower

Zafer Can Aktas, the mine owner's son, displays a damp chunk of meerschaum dug only seconds before. The largest pieces of meerschaum seldom exceed the size of a football.

Turkish law ensures that most meerschaum carving is reserved for Turkish artists.



Outside the village of Beyazaltin is a six-mile stretch of land that yields the highest quality meerschaum in the world.

quality meerschaum, the interpreter explained. On close examination, I could see black flecks in the stone.

The tunnel wasn't lit completely, so one of the miners led with a flashlight, and the other followed behind holding a crude-looking petroleum lamp with an open flame.

We approached an area where the tunnel opened up a bit, and we were able to stand up straight. One path, propped up with wooden boards and posts, continued on.

"We can't go in there," the interpreter explained. "It's unstable."

I must have unconsciously taken a step away from that direction, because everyone laughed and the interpreter told me that it wasn't that dangerous.

"Ha, ha!" I laughed nervously along with them, slowly edging even farther away. Maybe it was perfectly safe, but why take chances?

Next, we came along to another open area, but this time it went straight down about 30 feet. The miners had constructed a latticework of crude ladders made of tree branches and posts.

"Wow, pretty interesting," I thought to myself. "I can't believe they climb up and down that rickety setup!"

"We're going to climb down here now," my interpreter told me. I swallowed hard and considered balking. But my interpreter was already climbing down, and if he did it, then by God, I'd do it too.

Halfway down, when the ladder swayed under my weight, I must admit that I was a bit frightened. But when I made it to the bottom in one piece, my confidence returned. "What's the big deal?" I thought. "That was nothing!"

Once down at the bottom, we were in an area where they actually mined meerschaum.

The miner's son grabbed a pick and started digging away into the side of the wall. In about a minute he had extracted a piece of meerschaum about the size of a fist. Pieces of meerschaum usually don't get much bigger than a football.

He knocked the dirt off the chunk of meerschaum and handed it to me. The porous stone was damp—almost slimy. No wonder, since we were so close to the water table.

That was the end of the mine tour, and we climbed back up the ladders and took the elevator back above ground. This time I rode up with the other miner, who held the petroleum lamp so we could see. Every couple of feet there was an indention into the dirt wall. These were footholds, left over from the '60s and earlier—before the elevator—when miners climbed down a rope. I breathed a silent sigh of relief that I didn't have to do that.

Up above, Bekler, the mine owner and the driver sat waiting inside the house. We took off our shoes and went inside, and drank Turkish tea.

I sat back and relaxed for a few minutes as the others chatted in Turkish, but then asked the question that I hadn't dared think about until I was safely back out of the mine.

"Is it dangerous mining meerschaum?" I asked the owner. "Does anyone ever get hurt or killed?"

The mine owner told me that no one had been hurt in a long time, but was eager to tell stories of how dangerous things used to be.

He told personal stories—like one about the time when he was a kid and he slipped and fell while climbing down the rope (these were the days before the elevator). Another miner below caught him, or he would have fallen to his death. Or the time when they hit water and almost drowned as it rushed in and filled up their section of the mine.

I was glad I hadn't asked before I went down.

I left Beyazaltin and Eskisehir with a new appreciation for those ancient marine fossils called meerschaum. And even better, I departed with the knowledge that I wouldn't have to worry about claustrophobia on any future assignments, because apparently I don't suffer from it.

Anyone need a journalist for a story on spelunking? *P&T*

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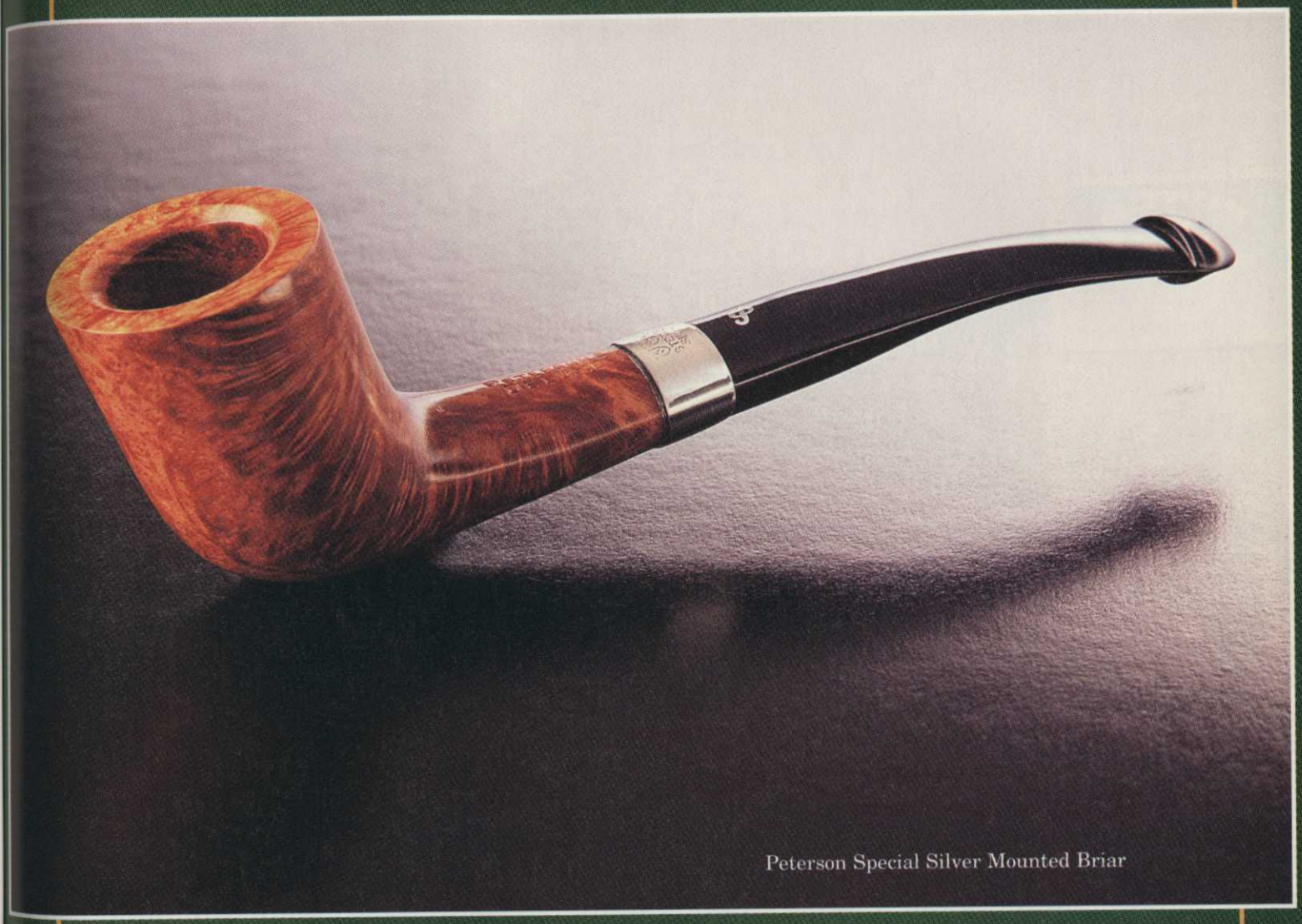

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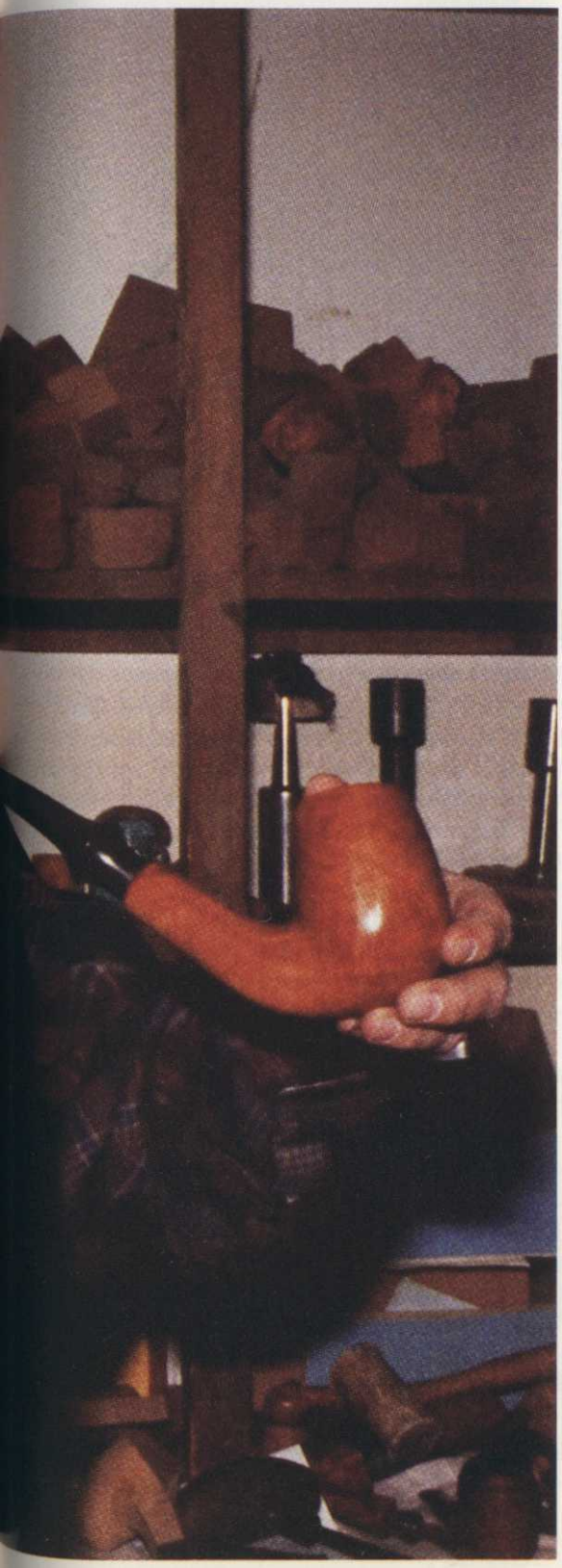


Pipe making is a life focus for Steve and Roswitha Anderson, resulting in full-time efforts since 1970

by Dayton H. Matlick

Columbus, Ohio, pipemaker Steve Anderson has three loves that have played essential roles in the last 35 years of his life—pipes, his wife, Roswitha, and pipe making. In fact, the three key elements of his life are so closely intertwined that it's impossible to separate them.

The road toward being one of the better-known smaller pipe manufacturers in the nation began at age 16 when Steve bought his first pipe at the old Smokers' Haven. The downtown tobacconist shop was the place in Columbus for pipes and tobaccos. That first pipe rapidly grew into a collection. He was fascinated by the wood, the grain, the shapes, the history—everything about pipes. He knew that he wanted to make pipes, but little did he realize where that longing would lead.

His father was an electrical engineer who thoroughly enjoyed woodworking as a hobby. Steve came by his early appreciation of wood and wood products in the workshop, working either with his father or on his own projects. Again influenced by his father, he became an electronic technician for Western Electric, now known as AT&T.

A critical time in his life came when he was drafted. By extending his draft time for one year, he became eligible for electronics training. He was later shipped to Germany where he helped train NATO troops in missile guidance maintenance for NIKE Ajax and Hercules missiles. It was there that the second of the three loves entered his life.

His missile group of 15 GIs "adopted" an orphanage near Soest, then West Germany, where they were stationed. Working there was a young German woman with a degree in clothing design. Lack of available work in her field had turned her to helping children at the orphanage, where she was a children's nurse. Even a limited amount of German language skills put Steve—or

A hobby turned into a full-time job for this electrician turned pipemaker.

This handsome briar is the largest pipe Steve has ever made. When asked its value, he answers simply, "Value isn't relevant because it isn't for sale."

"Petite" pipes in classical shapes, shown by Roswitha, are a speciality of S&R Pipes for both men and women who want either a smaller pipe or a shorter smoke. But Roswitha gets the greatest personal satisfaction from her free-form pipes, an outstanding example of which is shown in the upper right of the opposite page.

Steven as she has always called him—in close contact with Roswitha at the orphanage. Meeting Roswitha slowed down, but didn't eliminate, Steve's off-duty trips to learn about European pipe making.

Marriage, followed by a discharge taken in Germany, left Steve and Roswitha with the opportunity to spend even more time trying to learn all they could about pipes and pipe making, an interest they soon shared.

They were both frustrated with the secrecy and closed door policy of European pipemakers. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, pipe making was highly competitive and most manufacturers seems determined to avoid anything that would bring yet more competition into the marketplace.

Steve and Roswitha ended up in Saint-Claude, France, often given credit as the "home" of the modern briar pipe. It was there, in this small French town near the Swiss border and Lake Geneva, that briar captured the spotlight as a premier material for pipe carving.

Taken in by Jacques Craen of Genod Pipes, Steve and Roswitha began to get some true insights into the art of pipe making. Craen is the third generation pipemaker in his family, with strong indications that at least one of his sons will make it a fourth generation. The Andersons and Craens remain friends to this day, taking turns visiting each other in their home towns.

Much time was spent at the Saint-Claude Pipe Museum (open from May through September), a truly impressive repository of pipes of all kinds, shapes and materials. Eventually, later in his pipe-making career, Steve was honored by being inducted into the Confrerie des Maitres-Pipiers de Saint-Claude, France (The Master Pipemakers of Saint-Claude, France).

The Brotherhood, which dates from the late 1700s, is the only worldwide organized pipemakers' guild. It is presided over by the Master Pipemakers, all direct descendants of the original pipemakers of Saint-Claude.

In 1965, it was back to Columbus to rejoin Western Electric and to begin gathering the machines and tools that would enable him to convert his love of pipes into a hobby of pipe making. What vacations Steve and Roswitha could put together were spent going around the country trying to find out how others made pipes. Most U.S. pipemakers at that time were located along the East Coast and most were descendants of European pipemakers. Therefore, it wasn't much of a surprise when they met the same closed-mouth, uncooperative treatment here that they experienced in Europe.

A big breakthrough came for Steve and Roswitha when they came across the Philip Rieth

Company in West New York, New Jersey, which specialized in pipe-making machinery and sewing machines for the lace industry.

"They had been doing this for 100 years," says Steve. "They had wooden models of hundred of kinds of machines hanging in the rafters. You would say, 'I want a frasing machine,' or 'a top-turning machine.' They would get the models down and send them to a foundry to have them cast. In about six months, the machine would be ready.

"Back in the '40s, '50s and '60s, most U.S. pipes were made in larger factories," says Steve. "There were few, if any, private labels. Private makers manufactured anonymously for the larger companies. Even though there were a lot of outstanding pipemakers in those years, their names are now lost because they never made pipes with their own names on them. An example is Andre Mermet, one of probably many outstanding pipemakers."

Mermet was the son of a French pipemaker. He came to the U.S. when he was 15 and later opened a pipe factory, which eventually employed about six people full time. His pipes bore the names of many famous pipe factories, including that of Wilke Pipes, operated by the Wilke sisters. And it was Mermet who eventually solved the Andersons' information problems.

Steve and Roswitha bought a frasing machine, used to form the outside base of the bowl, and a couple of turning machines from the Philip Rieth Company and eventually got them to Columbus. Several months were spent trying to get them to operate properly. The top-turning machine wasn't much of a problem, but the frasing machine was driving Steve crazy.

"I was in a panic!" says Steve. "I had all of our savings tied up in these machines and some were just a big pile of iron. They wouldn't do anything! I called the Philip Rieth company and begged for help. They didn't know anything about operation of the machines they made, but recommended Andre Mermet."

Mermet, upon hearing of the plight of the Andersons, invited them into his factory and demonstrated on his machines the various operating procedures. The Andersons absorbed his instructions, went home and applied them to their new machines. They worked!

After years of gathering knowledge, buying tools and machinery, and experimentation, in 1970 Steve and Roswitha put everything behind them and took the huge leap into becoming full-time professional pipemakers, opening S&R Wood Crafts. The symbol for their shop is a stylized "S" shaped like a pipe, with smoke coming out of one end, with an "R" superimposed through it.

Their first shop was in a large concrete building behind their home. Today they manufacture pipes in a 3,000-square-foot workshop behind their retail tobacconist shop, Pipes and Pleasures, on East Main Street, also known as the old National Road, on the far east side of Columbus, Ohio. Until the last few years they lived in an apartment above the shop, but now live about a half-mile away—easy walking distance.

Steve is captivated by the historical, classical shapes of pipes, while Roswitha responds primarily to free-form pipes. Their manufacturing responsibilities have almost automatically become divided over the years because of the natural likes and affinities of each of these two strong individuals.

Steve does the basic forming of the classical shapes, forms the stems and mouthpieces and mates each stem and mouthpiece. He also does the sandblasting on the textured pipe bowls.

"I'm very particular about the mechanical parts—the size of the airhole, the location of the airhole, the mortise hole in the shank into which the stem fits.

"To me it's critical that the mortise hole in the shank is perfectly round and smooth. If the hole is drilled with a standard bit, it will turn out oval or triangular because of the pressure under which the wood is worked. For that reason I use reamers. I also add a slight angle on the inside, near the mouth of the hole, to ensure a perfect fit."

When Steve gets the bowl properly formed and the shank drilled to accept the stem mortise, the next step is to mate the stem, with its mouthpiece, to the bowl. Once mated, it is sanded and buffed until it fits perfectly. It then stays mated to the bowl throughout the rest of the creative process.

"The mouthpiece and the shank must fit together perfectly. There can't be any gaps. It must look like the whole pipe is just one piece

Secrecy and closed-door politics of pipe makers, here and abroad, frustrated Steve and Roswitha.

Roswitha does most of the sanding and buffing for all their pipes, as well as the staining, bringing them to a lustrous finish. Steve is very particular about the "mechanics" of making a pipe. To get a perfectly round mortise hole in the shank, he uses a reamer, far right, instead of a drill bit.

with nothing to jar the look or feel," says Steve.

The location of the airhole is also important to him. Within the industry, there are different views about the perfect place for the airhole. Some want it to enter the bowl below the bottom of the bowl; some want it above the bottom of the bowl; yet others say it should come in right at the bottom of the bowl. Steve is adamantly in favor of the latter location. Too high wastes tobacco; too low clogs too easily.

Another detail of special interest to Steve is the sandblasting of pipes to obtain a textured surface. In Europe, sandblasting is done with a number of pipes placed in a drum and sandblasted en masse. Steve has perfected a technique in which each pipe is sandblasted individually. Prior to sandblasting, Roswitha applies a special rubber tape to any part of the bowl or shank on which they desire to retain its natural finish. This tape is stripped away once sandblasting is completed.

In addition to smooth and sandblasted finishes, S&R Pipes specializes in a coral-textured finish. Roswitha carves the surface of each pipe in this category by hand, using a special bit. When finished, it is blasted with glass beads rather than the regular sand abrasive. The result is a spider-web effect, giving the impression of coral, after which it is named. It is smoother than a regular sandblasted pipe, and it is possible to see the grain coming through the texturizing.

Roswitha first got involved in creating wooden animal sculptures. She now excels in creating free-form pipes. She band saws the briar blocks into crude shapes, and then does all of the shaping and forming of the pipes by hand. In addition, she does most of the sanding and buffing for all of the pipes, both free-form and classical, and is the resident expert on colors and stains.

Colored and "petite" pipes are some of the specialities developed for their customers over the years.

When Steve and Roswitha were getting started, they sold many of their pipes at art festivals and fairs around the country, attending as many as 20 or 30 a year. However, at most of the street fairs the best-selling pipes were in the $20 to $30 category. That meant creating a lot of pipes in these cheaper categories to make a living.

Today they order nothing but high-grade Mediterranean briar and focus primarily on pipes in the $50 to $250 category. In the process, they have cut back to six or so special festivals where their quality is appreciated. One of those is the Ann Arbor, Michigan, Art Fair. And it was there that Roswitha made her point to Steve regarding colored pipes.

Since Ann Arbor is the home of the University of Michigan, Roswitha made six blue pipes with yellow "M's" on them. Being a traditionalist, Steve told her she was wasting her time; that she would bring all six home.

"I was wrong," says Steve. "Within the first couple of hours the blue pipes were all gone."

That was 25 years ago and Roswitha has been specializing in colors ever since, a secret that she doesn't share with their many pipe-making friends.

"We stain our pipes, but don't lacquer them like the Europeans, who have resumed attention to colors more recently. Lacquer keeps the pipes from breathing naturally," says Roswitha.

Although blue remains a popular color around the country, reds and oranges sell well, too. Greens are also popular, but the color doesn't hold up well under exposure to the sun

and ultraviolet light.

Developing colors for pipes is very much an art form. Roswitha starts with a wide variety of pigment powders, mixes them to form liquids, coats the pipe and wipes it off so the result can be judged. A pipe is often coated a number of times with a wide variety of pigments until the result is just right to Roswitha's experienced eye. There is no standard formula possible because each batch of pigment produces different results.

"We call our blue 'ocean blue,'" says Roswitha. "If you look closely, you can see that the blue is made up of a number of other colors, too."

The pipes are completely sanded and buffed to a high finish before the color is applied. When just the right color is produced, a final polishing is completed before carnauba wax is applied. This protects the pipe from handling until it is sold. Once it is smoked, it develops a matte finish. But, as is also true with S&R's more traditional finishes, if a colored pipe gets dull, rubbing it with a soft cloth will bring back much of the original color and luster.

"The reason the finish comes back by rubbing is that we go through three to four different sanding stages on each and every pipe we make. This is followed by at least three buffing stages. When we get finished," says Roswitha, "even the natural wood shines. It's that ultimate finish that comes back with a little rubbing."

The art fairs at which the Andersons will sell their pipes this year include the Ann Arbor Art Fair; the Buffalo (N.Y.) Art Fair; New York City Lincoln Center Art Festival; the Yankee Peddler Festival, Canal Fulton (Ohio); the National Craft Fair, Gaithersburg (Md.); the (Minneapolis) Minnesota Uptown Festival, and the Nashville (Tenn.) Artisan Fair. With the reduced travel schedule, plus sales made from their tobacconist shop, the Andersons now create and sell around 2,000 pipes a year, down from more than 3,000 in their more hectic early days.

The most expensive pipes they ever sold were a seven-day, straight-grain set. They sold it for $5,400 within hours at the first art fair at which they exhibited it. They were forced to ask the buyer to let them keep it another two weeks because of promotions made about the set to other shows they planned to attend.

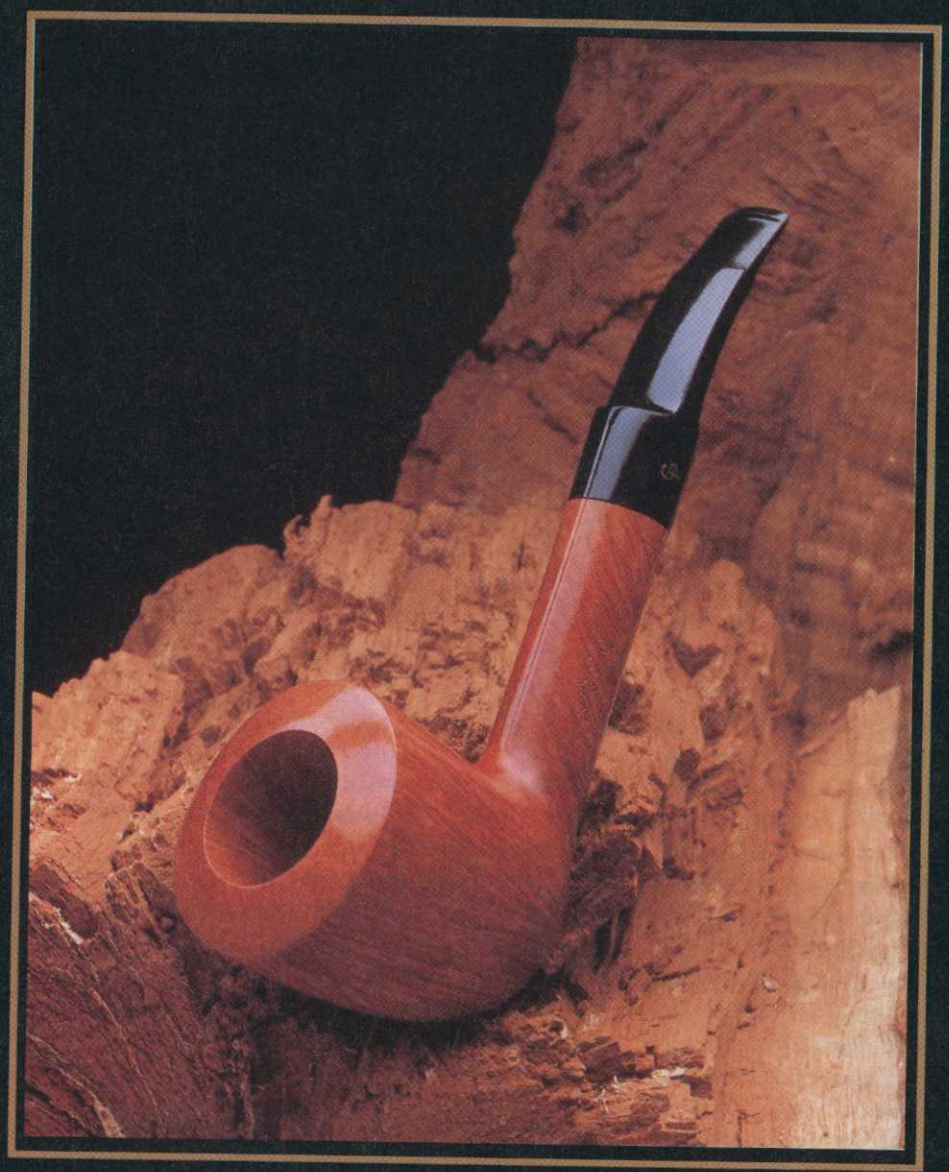
Perhaps the greatest honor received by Steve and Roswitha was in 1984 when Pipe Collectors International chose the Andersons to produce the 1985 collector club pipes. The pipes, individually numbered and stamped with the PCI logo, were distributed to PCI members all over the world. The Andersons competed for the honor with nine of the largest European pipe companies and two large U.S. companies. They were the first American pipemakers ever chosen to produce the PCI collector pipes. This honor was in addition to the more than 25 awards for excellence the couple has received.

After 35 years of pursuing their mutual love and dreams of pipe making, Steve and Roswitha still get excited about their artistry. Words tumble over each other as they share their love of pipe making, and of the many people they have met along the way. But the focus is still on producing quality pipes of all types to meet their customers' wants and needs.

About half of the pipes they sell are bought by women. Most women buy the pipes for "a certain someone," but a growing number are buying pipes for their own use.

Two out of three buyers of both sexes prefer a bent stem. And a significant number prefer some of Roswitha's special colors. Another specialty is "petite" pipes in classical shapes for men who have time for only a small bowl of tobacco, or ladies who prefer a smaller pipe.

An infatuation with pipes led Steve over two continents and stayed with him many decades. It helped him find a wife who not only could share his dedication, but who brought unique strengths of her own to the partnership. The pipe-smoking public have been the beneficiaries of the craftsmanship represented in the tens of thousands of quality pipes created by Steve and Roswitha Anderson over the last 35 years. *P&T*



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Serendipity

Modern pipe smokers benefit from nature's gift of "white burley," a beneficial mutation

By Dayton H. Matlick

Modern burley tobacco, one of the most important tobaccos in blends created for pipes, is a fortunate genetic mistake.

Prior to the Civil War, all tobaccos grown in Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio were known as burley, a light air-cured tobacco that had moved west from Virginia. Principal varieties were known as twist bud, red burley and little burley.

Then, in 1864 as the stories go, George Webb, a tobacco grower in Brown County, Ohio, planted some burley seeds he had purchased in Bracken County, Kentucky. As they grew, he noticed they were a strange, light color, quite unlike the darker green seedlings of little burley he had expected. Assuming the seeds were diseased, he destroyed the plants.

The next year, because of a shortage of seed, he was forced to plant the remainder of the "failed" seeds. When the crop was harvested and sold, it was well received by buyers at the market. It was light-bodied, had a fine texture and produced a milder smoke than the standard burley tobaccos of the area.

A rare biological phenomenon, this mutation or sport soon became the only type of leaf tobacco grown as burley.

The taste of burley is rather bland, mainly because it has very little sugar in its chemical composition, especially when compared to flue-cured tobacco of the southeastern coastal states, which has a very high sugar content in comparison.

Burley is important in pipe tobaccos because the leaves have the ability to absorb large quantities of flavorings or "sauces." This is complemented by a fine texture and good burning quality.

As the popularity of white burley skyrocketed, its production spread rapidly through the deep, fertile open soils of the bluegrass regions of Kentucky and Tennessee. To this day, these states remain the primary producers of burley tobacco, with lesser amounts produced in Ohio, Indiana, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and Missouri.

Seeds are planted in specially prepared and covered seedbeds to protect the emerging plants against the cold of early spring. Today, about 50 percent of the seedlings are grown in greenhouse systems. Tobacco seeds begin to germinate at about 65 degrees. An interesting note is that one ounce of seeds contains an amazing 300,000 to 350,000 individual seeds.

When the seedlings are approximately 4 to 5 inches tall, they are transplanted into fields at the rate of about 3,000 to 4,000 plants an acre.

It takes about 250 man-hours of labor, some of which is physically exhausting, for each acre of burley tobacco raised.

Once the crop is in the field, farmers have a season-long battle to protect the crop from weeds, insects and disease.

At harvest, a heavy tobacco knife is used to cut the entire stalk. This, in turn, is impaled on a stick with five other stalks and left to dry in the field before being transported to a barn for further curing. Burley is cured in open barns by natural air, in contrast to flue-cured tobacco, which is cured by artificial heat in specially constructed barns.

After approximately six weeks of curing in the barns, stalks are taken into a stripping room where leaves are removed from the stalks and separated by color, appearance, body and leaf position in preparation for winter auction sale.

Mid-stalk positions are usually preferred for pipe tobacco. Top leaves or "tips" are also selected at times.

Burley is then sold at auction. The average price is currently more than $1.80 a pound.

In 1995, approximately 246,600 acres of burley were harvested in this country, producing over 500 million pounds. In comparison, the total amount of smoking tobacco used in pipes and roll-your-own cigarettes—of which burley is only one element—was 14.7 million pounds. The majority of burley production goes into cigarettes and leaf tobacco exports.

The amount of burley tobacco in a pipe blend will vary from 10 percent to 100 percent, depending on the blend. The higher the percentage of burley, the stronger tasting the blend.

Burley tobacco allotments are set by the government and are relatively small, averaging only about one acre. Each acre will average about 2,200 pounds of burley. The reliable income from this crop is the mainstay for many smaller farmers. It is the single crop that makes the difference between survival and failure.

Burley tobacco is just as essential to pipe smokers across this country. Its great smoking characteristics and its ability to absorb flavorings are essential to producing blends that pipe smokers have grown to appreciate and demand. ***P&T***

This young tobacco plant growing vigorously in a field is the beginning of an essential crop for burley farmers. (Inset: Although beautiful, burley flowers are cut off at an early stage to redirect energy to the leaves.)

BURLEY
a family tradition

Burley tobacco, one of the key ingredients of pipe tobaccos, has been raised by this Kentucky family for five generations

by Mary Jo Wagner

U.S. burley tobacco—one of the key ingredients in most pipe tobacco blends—sets the standard for world burley production. If you want to know about burley tobacco, you've got to go to burley country, and in the U.S. that usually means Kentucky, home of Churchill Downs, thoroughbred horses, mint juleps, bourbon, basketball and bluegrass.

My assignment: Talk to a long-time burley-raising family and find out what (and who) is involved in consistently producing a quality crop. My target: Madison County, which ranks fourth in the state in burley production. In 1994, burley farmers in this county grew 11 million pounds of burley tobacco. Within the county, my goal is a farm near Richmond, located about 25 miles south of Lexington.

As I sit in my rented Mitsubishi Mirage at 10 in the morning in early November, I enjoy the quiet, watching the sun slowly melt away the frost from the long, thin grass bent in clumps along the pencil-thin road.

I'm waiting for Harold Harris, an experienced burley tobacco farmer. Harold has been up since 5 a.m., but thankfully, we agreed to meet at a more reasonable hour.

Precisely five minutes later, I hear the roar of a tractor. I see part of Harold's brown baseball cap first in the distance, and then he appears over the rise, riding high on his green John Deere tractor, pulling a wagon heaped with brown leaves. He's taking the mass of burley tobacco to one of three barns he and his son, William, operates. There the leaves will be stripped off the stalks and baled into square bundles for the market. I follow him up a rough, gravel path leading to the barn, and our day together begins.

The Harrises grow KY 1021, one of several available burley varieties. And as I tour their barns, their land and their homes, Harold and William discuss the only way of life they've ever known and ever wanted.

Tobacco has been in Harold Harris' family for at least five generations. Harold's grandmother grew tobacco; his father grew tobacco; and Harold has grown tobacco for 49 years. His son, William, grows tobacco, and William's sons, Greg, 15, and Stewart, 13, are continuing the family tradition.

A man who can't be bothered with taking a vacation, Harold introduced tobacco to his children as soon as they could walk. William grins as Harold recalls what seems to be a familiar story, "When he (William) and his sister were young, we'd take them to the stripping room," Harold says. "We placed them on a table and put a bar across it so his sister wouldn't kick him off, and let them take naps. We practically raised them in the stripping room." William inaugurated his sons into the world of tobacco farming in basically the same fashion as his father.

When we meet in the open barn this day, rows of burley tobacco hang far above our heads and neatly stacked bales extend from a wall. The warm sun massages our backs, leaving our faces and hands exposed to the crisp, cool air carrying the faint, sweet smell of drying—curing—burley tobacco. Harold and William take this time to explain how burley tobacco is grown and the many risks involved.

In early March they plant the tiny tobacco seeds in styrofoam trays that float on a specially-designed waterbed. The waterbed is covered with plastic sheeting to keep the seeds warm. They plant in three- or four-day intervals so all of the plants don't mature at the same time. This helps spread the labor out at both transplanting and harvesting times. It's a tedious process, but one that beats the traditional method of planting each seed directly into the soil of a plantbed.

"We have a lot more fun this way," says William. "We bring several people in, turn the radio on, have coffee and make it comfortable."

The plants are ready to be transplanted into the field in about four to five weeks. Between checking the water and fertilizer levels in the waterbed, Harold

Harold, left; William, right; and William's sons Greg, center, and Stewart, not shown, are all involved in producing burley tobacco.

FAIRNESS
FARMERS

and William prepare the fields for the new burley tobacco crop.

The Harrises try to begin the transplanting process around May 15, removing each burley plant from its styrofoam tray and transplanting the seedling into the fields.

"At transplant time we work pretty hard," says William. "We work as long as there is daylight, from sunup to sundown, trying to get the seedlings all out as quickly as possible."

Traditionally, transplanting the 3-inch tall burley seedlings was back-breaking and painfully slow work. Farmers had to pull each plant from the conventional plantbed and transplant it into the field by hand.

"It was much harder to take care of the plants that way," says Harold. "You had to pull weeds constantly, and if the weather was dry you had to water the seedlings. There was much more maintenance involved."

Mechanization has made the process easier now, which may be why this is grandson Stewart's favorite part of growing tobacco. The Harrises use a mechanical tobacco setter, saving both time and labor because only one person is needed on the transplanter, plus one on the tractor. It takes the Harrises until early June to transplant their 18-acre burley crop.

Burley tobacco growers spend eight months a year nurturing their crop. Without their constant care, Mother Nature could wreak havoc on both quality and quantity of tobacco.

Once the burley hits the field, its kelly-green leaves grow and broaden out very quickly. Burley tobacco requires constant care until harvest. William and Harold follow the particular growing needs of the plant carefully, cultivating it when they should, applying fertilizer at the right time and spraying needed chemicals to kill weeds, insects and diseases that can greatly damage, if not kill, the plant.

A great deal of pruning is also required. After about seven weeks, a flower head containing many buds begins to form on the top of each plant. These heads have to be cut off—or topped—while they are still in the bud or early flower stage. As William explains, "The purpose of a plant, in its feeble little mind, is to reproduce," he says. "It grows that bud to make a seed. If you don't cut the bud out, the leaves will be stunted because all of the plant's energy is focused on the seed. By eliminating it, all the growth will go into the leaves."

The emergence of suckers creates another challenge. Suckers are the burley plant's second attempt at making new leaves. Growing from the top to the bottom of the stalk, suckers are shoots that spring from the intersection of stalk and leaves. And just as its name implies, it sucks the growth from the leaves.

Suckers also keep the burley from curing correctly because they block the air. If a sucker appears, it needs to be removed as well. This is usually done chemically.

Around the end of August or early September, the Harrises begin harvesting and housing, or hanging, the plants; a physical nightmare, say William and Harold.

With an all-male crew of between two and 10 workers, they take to the fields, hatchet-like tobacco knives in hand. Each stalk of burley is cut at the base, turned upside down, and speared with a long, pointed stick. Six stalks are spaced apart on each stick, and after each stick is full, it's set upright at a 45 degree angle, resting on the plants' tips. The sticks are eventually hung horizontally on trailers and transported to the barn for hanging.

Harold and William say even the most physically fit person won't last past eight hours in a day. ▶

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Harvesting burley tobacco is backbreaking work. Each stalk is cut near the ground, speared onto a stick, and left in the field to partially dry before being hung in a barn.

"You'll finally give out," says Harold. "The cutting is the hardest work on the farm."

"You're bending, you're twisting, you're lifting all the time," says William. "You've got to bend over six times for each stick. If you cut 1,000 sticks each day, that's 6,000 times you've bent over. Even Jane Fonda couldn't do that.

"It hurts," he ends with a nod.

At 71, Harold can still cut about 600 sticks a day; William, about 800 "on a real good day."

"Some of those boys can cut 1,500 sticks a day," says a wide-eyed Harold.

Very little mechanization has come along to ease the pain of cutting burley tobacco. But with the unique barn William had built, the process of housing the burley has become quicker and easier, but the stress of working against the weather has not.

"If it's a cool day, like in late September where it will get down to 40 degrees, and a very cool wind blows, the leaves of the cut tobacco will start to dry out early and wilt," says William. "It bruises the tobacco leaves. So you've really got to push to get the tobacco into the barns."

Using a hydraulic cable hoist, 40 to 50 sticks, or two rails, of burley can be hung at one time in a barn. The stalks are spread out to get air between the leaves, raised up and placed on sturdy wooden beams four feet apart, which run the length of the barn.

"Using the hoist, I hung this barn and another barn by myself, where normally it would take four people to hang the tobacco in a conventional barn," says William, gazing at the burley hanging above. "It's a fairly new technique and we like it."

The hoist has not replaced all the physical demands of housing the tobacco, however, as the stalks are very heavy, heavy enough to break the stick if they are not properly spaced out. Substantial bending and lifting are still required.

Without the help of a machine, housing in a conventional barn is all the more physically draining. With one person standing at the top of the barn, one at the middle and one at the bottom, each with his feet four feet apart, the rails of tobacco get hung, two at a time, while the pungent chemicals given off by the plant burn the eyes and nose.

Housing takes about three to four weeks. Extending it longer than that, a farmer risks running into frost and damaging the crop.

The burley then cures over the next six weeks, turning the brilliant green leaves to dark, reddish tones at the tips of the stalk, reddish-brown tones in the middle and tan tones at the bottom, much the same as a tree spins its leaves into a color wheel of oranges, yellows, reds and browns in the fall.

Unlike flue-cured tobacco, which is artificially dried by heat to produce a golden leaf, burley tobacco must be air-cured.

Drying naturally produces its rich colors and, most important, its sweet flavor as it moistens and dries out repeatedly.

The Harrises' physical nightmare comes to an end at this point, although there are still a few more steps left to take.

Ultimately, when the burley is brought down, they want it to be "in case," or moist, so the leaves won't crack and break off. The burley is then carried in bulk to the stripping room where the leaves are picked off the stalk by hand and graded.

This is the stage they are in when I visit them. They welcome the diversion I create; as William says, stripping is "monotonous."

As we enter the heated room, there are three women and two men standing at a long table, separated by mounds of burley stalks. Their hands as brown as the leaves they are pulling off, they methodically strip each stalk and discard the bare stick onto the dust-covered cement floor.

William built this stripping room three years ago. He purposefully connected it to the barn because he had too many memories of growing up trudging through sleet and snow to haul in burley.

The Harrises separate, or grade, the leaves as they are positioned along the stalk. The first segment contains the tan flyings, or bottom leaves; the second is the reddish-brown leaves and "cutters" in the

middle; the third is the dark, reddish tips, which are the heaviest and strongest-flavored leaves.

Depending on the blend, tobacco companies will choose different parts of the stalk for their pipe tobacco, which typically ranges through the middle of the plant, from just above the flyings to just below the tips.

Much the family affair, everyone in the Harris family has had a turn at stripping burley; even Ruby, the city girl from Cincinnati.

"The first year Ruby and I were married, 20 years ago, I was working over at my uncle's farm and we were stripping at night," recalls William, laughing. "At that time, we were still hand-tying tobacco, and I taught Ruby to strip. I didn't remember how long her fingers were and when I went to check on her, she was holding this huge mass of tobacco and still adding to it. It was really funny. But she did very well."

Both Greg and Stewart take part in stripping as well, although Greg tries to get involved in all facets of growing tobacco.

After all the burley is stripped and baled, William and Harold load their crop and take it to the auction market to sell.

For eight months out of each year, Harold and William endure the sometimes agonizing process of growing burley tobacco. Much like a game of poker, whether they'll have a good hand, or in their case, a good crop, is anyone's guess—nature is their opponent.

"I've had more than a few sleepless nights," says Harold.

Gone indeed are the days of the 16th and 17th centuries when tobacco was not only a crop, but also the primary currency. Almost from the beginning, tobacco farming was the most important source of farm income for many Kentucky families. Today, it is still the single most profitable row crop Kentucky farmers can grow.

Thus, the arrival at the market is perhaps the most crucial event of the burley-growing season. That is where government graders enter the warehouse and grade each farmer's burley. The grade determines the support price and greatly influences how much money farmers receive.

What the companies don't buy at the auction markets is bought by the farmer-owned Burley Growers Tobacco Cooperative Association.

The Co-op borrows money from the government to buy the unsold or excess burley. It later pays the loan back to the government with interest. And the assessment fee to cover this activity is universally applied to all tobacco farmers, whether they have any burley taken by the Co-op or not.

Contrary to many political and media statements, tobacco farmers aren't subsidized. They pay their own way under a no-net-cost arrangement with the government. The government's expenses are generally limited to administration costs within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which includes pay for the federal graders.

Gone also are the days when tobacco was greatly in demand to cure migraines and other ailments that afflicted people in the early years of this country. Now smoking tobacco is desired solely for the sheer pleasure of its taste, aroma and soothing effects.

But the opposition to smoking has grown just as high, if not higher than its popularity.

Harold and William have seen societal opposition to smoking brew to a frenzy in recent years, much to their amazement.

"I go into so many places now and see 'No Smoking' signs everywhere," says Harold. "But yet if I hand shop owners money, and tell them it's tobacco money, they'll take it just the same."

They've been witness to a host of other changes in the tobacco industry as well.

They've seen tobacco company buyers change their minds about the type of burley they want time after time. They've witnessed a "merger mania" of tobacco companies, resulting in fewer buyers at the markets. They've seen support prices drop to an all-time low and never regain their peak. And they've been hit with the Clinton administration's proposal to allow the FDA to regulate tobacco as a drug, the latest assault on their livelihood.

"We get a lot of resistance from the public," says Harold. "And now we're battling the FDA, which is trying to say tobacco is a drug. That's the worst fight we've had yet."

But through it all, Harold and William still enjoy growing burley. Harold knew he wanted to farm at the young age of 22 and never quit. It seems William is following the same pattern.

"Tobacco farming is a first for me," says William. "You can't get rid of it. It's in my blood. I'll never change that." *P&T*

After six weeks of air-drying in a barn, burley is ready for stripping from the stalks.

Honduran Handmade Cigars

Cuban immigrants have helped build the Honduran premium cigar industry into one of the strongest in the world

by Phil Bowling

Betty, travel agent extraordinaire/den mother, fingers poised over her keyboard, slowly shifted her gaze from computer screen to me. "You know," she asked slowly, allowing a moment for each word to sink in, "Honduras is about 80 percent undeveloped?"

"Yes," I replied. "And do you know how much I love cigars?"

Cigars. Cee-gars! I love them all. Like a kid on Christmas eve, they dance in my head. The Excalibur. Bering. Nat Sherman. Zino. The new Astral.

Fragrant. Tasty. Some very nice smokes at a variety of price points. And in Honduras, I'd see them all. Smoke them all. See them made by experienced, gentle hands. Clip the ends and puff under palm trees.

Undeveloped country? Technically, that's true. But Honduras' cigar industry is world class. Bidding "adios" to Betty, I scrambled home to pack.

Sandwiched between Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua in the Caribbean basin, Honduras is the second-largest exporter of premium cigars to the United States. No. 1 is the Dominican Republic, an island nation sharing its border with Haiti. The entire country of Honduras is slightly larger than Tennessee in land mass.

Honduras has held No. 2 stature since the mid-1970s, when the Dominican Republic ranked fifth in premium cigar exports to the U.S. Back then, the largest importer of premium cigars was Canary Islands/Spain.

But by the early 1980s, the Dominican Republic surpassed all others to take the top spot and, despite great flux in the marketplace, competitive Honduras tightened its grip on No. 2. This during a period of premium cigar renaissance. U.S. sales of premium stogies have climbed from 67 million in 1976 to 125 million in 1994, almost doubling. In 1994, 66 million premium cigars were exported from the DR to the U.S., and 41 million Honduran cigars landed in American humidors. Together, the two countries contribute about 86 percent of the total U.S. premium cigar market.

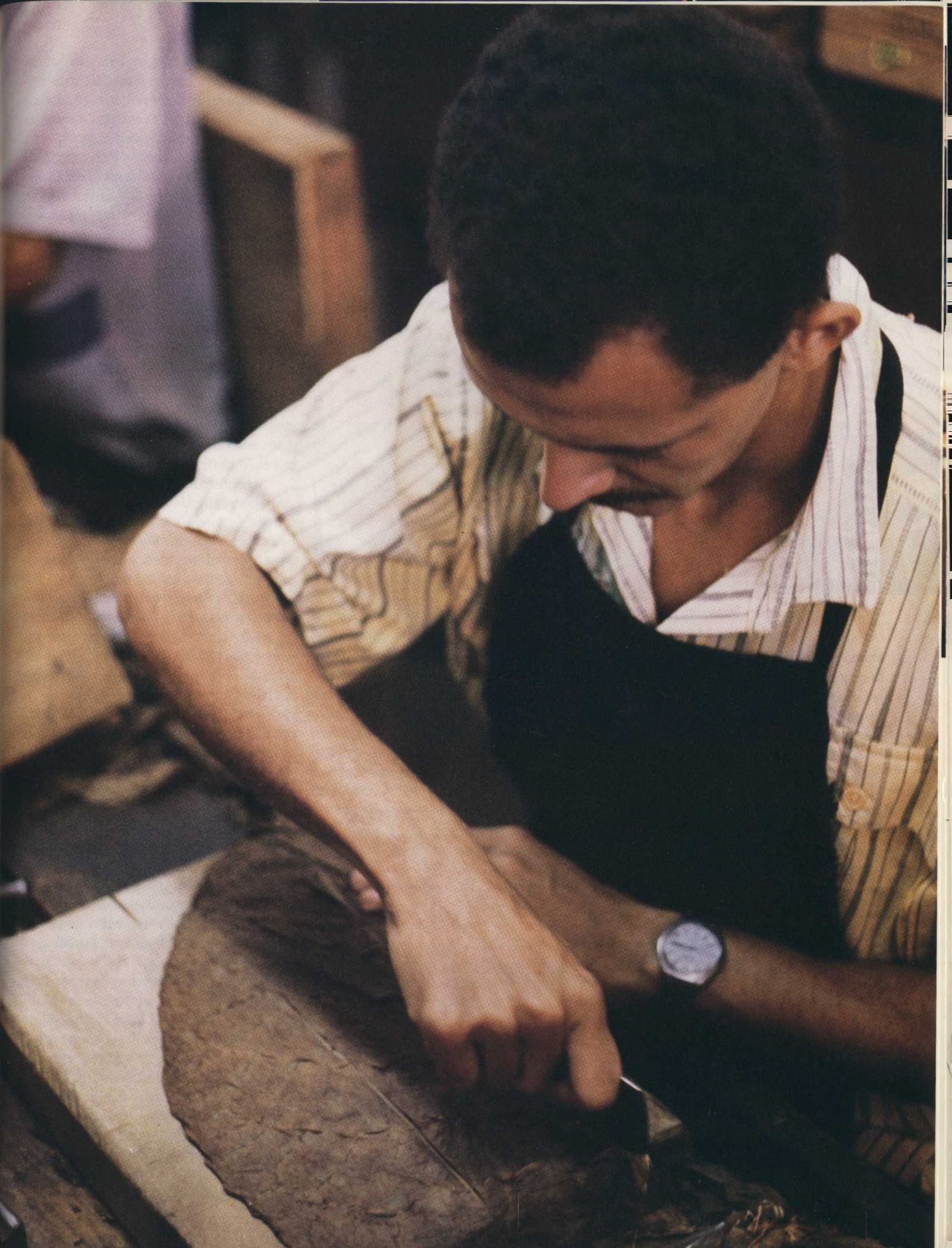
Thank Cuba, incidentally. When Fidel Castro took power in the early 1960s and seized control of factories and farms, citizens fled to neighboring Caribbean countries and to Florida.

Now the majority of folks operating factories in Honduras and the Dominican are of Cuban heritage. Many of the rollers working in factories were either trained in Cuba or were taught by those who learned the Cuban craft. Both countries also tend to use Cuban-seed tobaccos in their cigars.

And while Cuban cigars remain an embargoed and illegal product in the United States—and some argue that the country's hard times are reflected in the cigars it produces today—few dispute Cuba's mastery of the cigarmaking craft over the past two centuries.

My travel plans had me fly into San

Honduras has a lock on second place as a source for booming U.S. premium cigar imports.



Quality tobacco, the key beginning point, is examined by plant manager Estelo Padron, left; and Villazon's Carol Llaneza and Frank Llaneza.

Pedro Sula, near Honduras' northwestern border. I would visit Villazon in the outlying community of Cofradia. Then on to Danli, where the majority of Honduran cigars are made. Besides Cofradia and Danli, Honduran cigar production also is concentrated in Santa Rosa de Copan, near the Guatemalan border, home to Zino cigars.

My first visit: Villazon, makers of popular brands Bances, Hoyo de Monterrey, Excalibur, Punch, Rey del Mundo and several cigars for Swisher International. The company has been making cigars in Honduras for some 30 years.

Carol Llaneza, daughter of Villazon's co-owner Frank Llaneza, ferried me on arrival to our first stop. This early 30s, fireball of energy is an avid cigar smoker.

Once refreshed in Cofradia, we planted a fat cigar between our teeth. Frank Llaneza was at the plant. A tanned grandfatherly type, dressed in a starched white "cigar" shirt, he shook my hand in welcome and gave Carol a peck on the cheek.

He was in the main office, located on a raised platform and completely enclosed with glass windows. From his desk, Frank can observe the hundreds of people working together like the intricate moving parts of a clock.

It's difficult to pinpoint Honduran cigars' allure. They defy easy classification because of their vast variety. Some are smooth; others are a heavier, robust smoke. Touring factories and tasting countless stogies, however, reveals one truism: Honduran cigars are made by seasoned experts with loving care. At Villazon, I had my first glimpse of this.

In the main factory, I soon discovered a high-speed shutter was necessary to photograph the action at cigar rollers' tables. Young and old, men and women, the Villazon rollers all take pleasure in what they do and smiled shyly at the conspicuous American photojournalist milling through the room. Workers quickly passed by, supplying more tobacco leaves, delivering bunches of tobacco that have taken shape in cigar molds, and taking away bundles of freshly rolled cigars. Others continuously swept scraps of tobacco that fell to the floor.

Outside, on the sidewalk between the factory and the cigar box operation, Frank gave a knowing smile to his daughter as I paused in amazement and snapped photos of plant manager Estelo Padron's prized fighting cocks. Later, as I traveled from factory to factory, I discovered that Hondurans seem to enjoy their cockfights almost as much as they do hand-rolled cigars.

The flight from San Pedro Sula to Tegucigalpa, Honduras' capital, reminded me of flying over North Carolina. Lush pine forests, rolling hills, flat meadows, tree-lined lakes and, of course, the mountains.

The flight lasted only an hour. The attendants had just finished their last round through the cabin, and the pilot asked all to prepare for landing.

Odd, I thought. We were still pretty high in the sky.

Suddenly the plane skimmed the top of a mountain range and made a nosedive into the city. I was shocked. Scared. And without thinking, I doubled-over, hunched in the brace position.

Seconds later, we were taxiing.

Sheepishly, I glanced at my peers. Obviously I was the only passenger who had never made this flight before. No one was the least bit ruffled. I quickly and quietly gathered my belongings.

"Phil, it is so good to meet you," Nestor Plasencia of Plasencia Tabacos greeted. "You are going to have quite the experience during your visit." He spoke with the enthusiasm of a child introducing a friend to a new discovery.

The friendliness of this man surrounded me; we shook hands the entire time he spoke. Plasencia, in his mid-40s, wears a pair of silver-framed round glasses. Shocks of silver in his once-black hair contrast against his dark skin.

Introductions made, we headed to Danli. But not before a cigar was offered, one of his best and newest. A Cuban-seed, medium-bodied CAO sporting a red, gold and black band reminiscent of art deco.

It was an hour and a half drive along winding mountain roads to the small town of Danli.

Danli is not a thriving metropolis. It doesn't offer much for the tourist and probably isn't known for anything—outside cigar circles. I was eager to get there.

Plasencia Tabacos, with an expected turnout of 26 million cigars for 1995, is likely the largest, totally handmade, cigar factory in Honduras. Plasencia hesitated as he stated this fact, almost surprised at the accomplishment he has achieved since starting the cigar factory 10 years ago.

Swisher International is his largest

client. For that company, he makes the Bering and the La Primadora cigars, both slightly spicy, premium smokes. Other major clients include: M&N Cigar, Thompson, NorStar Imports, Tropical Tobacco, InterAmerican Cigar, J.R. Tobacco, Brick-Hanauer, Lane Limited and Hollco-Rohr.

As we pulled into town, we made our way to the Hotel Granada. I had been warned—by every person I called about this trip—that the hotel was "adequate" in its offerings, but it was not like what I am "accustomed to in the United States."

My first impression was that of a mom-and-pop motel of the 1960s. It looked quaint. I checked in and made a dash to my room to drop off my bags.

I opened the door, turned on the light and found two full-size beds and two twin beds. Was it all mine? Did they give me the wrong room? Would I have to share these quarters?

My growling stomach reminded me Plasencia was waiting in the lobby. I would ask these questions while we ate.

Later, over a mouth-watering churrasco (a thick, tender cut of steak), Plasencia assured me the room was all mine—I had the deluxe room. He had told them I was an important journalist from the U.S. and they should try to impress me so I'd come back.

Move over, Dan Rather!

Plasencia grew up in Cuba. He spent his youth in the Pinar Del Rio area—long famed as THE cigar region of the world. He was a teen when Castro came into power. The government took his family's two farms, and in May 1965, the family gave up hope that things might change and moved to Nicaragua.

They settled in the town of Esteli and began growing tobacco in the famed Jalapa Valley. Success continued until 1979 when the Sandinistas seized their farm. So they moved again, this time to Danli, Honduras, where the soil is rich and the weather supreme.

After our hearty meal—soup, salad, the 14-ounce filet, a baked potato and soft drinks—we relaxed with a drink and visited some more.

Again, another robust cigar was savored.

On Saturday, Plasencia said, he would make a trip to Nicaragua to look at some barns and farmland he might buy. Would I like to join him?

I hesitated, and he noticed. "There is nothing to worry about," he assured. "It is a short day trip." He failed to tell me that his car was stopped and he was robbed by vandals just a few weeks earlier along the very road we would take. Another cigar manufacturer told me of this event a few days after I'd made the journey—twice.

Friday morning began at the main factory. Through the course of the day, we made visits to Plasencia's box factory and tobacco sorting operation. In the late afternoon, a friend of Plasencia—who happens to work for UST's Centro-American Cigar Factory in Danli—stopped by Plasencia's office to wish us a good weekend. The two bantered back and forth about cigars and who makes the best cigar in Danli. They finally agreed—it is either UST or Plasencia—and laughed about their long friendship and friendly competition.

Few things are secret in Danli. The town is simply too small for secrets. The cigar makers in town know one another well, chat over drinks and talk about universal problems in the cigar industry. Everyone knows where the others are getting their tobaccos, who they are hiring and who is in town visiting them that week.

On my way to the Puros Indio Cigars Tobacco Factory, I shared a taxi with a family of four. While I sat wedged in the back seat of this compact car with the mother and two children squirming and staring, the father sat comfortably in the front passenger seat. We dropped the family off at a bus station located in the midst of a farmers market in town before heading to the factory.

Owned and operated by Orlando Reyes Sr. and Jr., the factory is housed in an old motel building. The Reyes make the Cuba Aliados cigar here for JR Tobacco. Wearing a white baseball cap pulled down snugly on his head, Reyes Sr. was hard at work.

The tall, thin man, dressed in a T-shirt and white painter pants, was relatively quiet at first. He's got a lot of information about cigars in his head, but he wanted to size me up first.

Reyes' company makes the biggest cigar in Honduras, literally. It's a 66-gauge, 18-inch giant Generale. The Louisville Slugger of Cigars.

I had to see how these monsters were made. Once inside, though, I was even more fascinated by the motel-turned-factory itself.

The business office is located where a check-in lobby once was. Cigars are rolled in rooms that were once the restaurant and meeting facilities.

Walk through an open-air corridor to a courtyard and there are the former hotel rooms. The doors are weathered and some of the numbers are missing, but they remain separated in their original cube shapes. Tobacco is aging in Room 7. Labels and cellophane are stored in Room 10. Orlando Reyes Sr. took me on a tour of the facility, opening each of the rooms with the "hotel" master key.

Roosters rustled between the legs of employees walking through the courtyard. By now, workers are oblivious to the birds scurrying about. The only place roosters

Tobacco coming out of storage must be properly conditioned before it can be worked.

A binder leaf (upper left) is used to gather smaller filler leaves that each bring their own component of flavor. When a cigar is basically formed, a wrapper leaf (lower left) is used to complete the finished product. Hand rollers receive extensive training to qualify them to produce quality premium cigars.

are not allowed is inside the factory.

Reyes Sr. is known around town for the hours he keeps at the factory. Some wonder if he ever sleeps. Others speculate that he works all night and sleeps by day.

With a laugh, Reyes clarified the gossip. He keeps regular business hours, he said, but confessed that when insomnia strikes he opts to work in the factory to bide time until sleep comes, rolling cigars, one by one, then bundling.

Orlando Padron and his son, Jorge, operate a factory in Danli across the road from my hotel. The elder Padron is brother to Estelo Padron, who manages the Villazon factory. Much like his brother, Orlando's hands and face speak of his experience and the hard work he has done to attain his goals. Jorge, in his late 20s, is still earning his wrinkles—a master's degree in business makes him quite an asset to the family business. The handsome young man has an athletic build and boyish good looks.

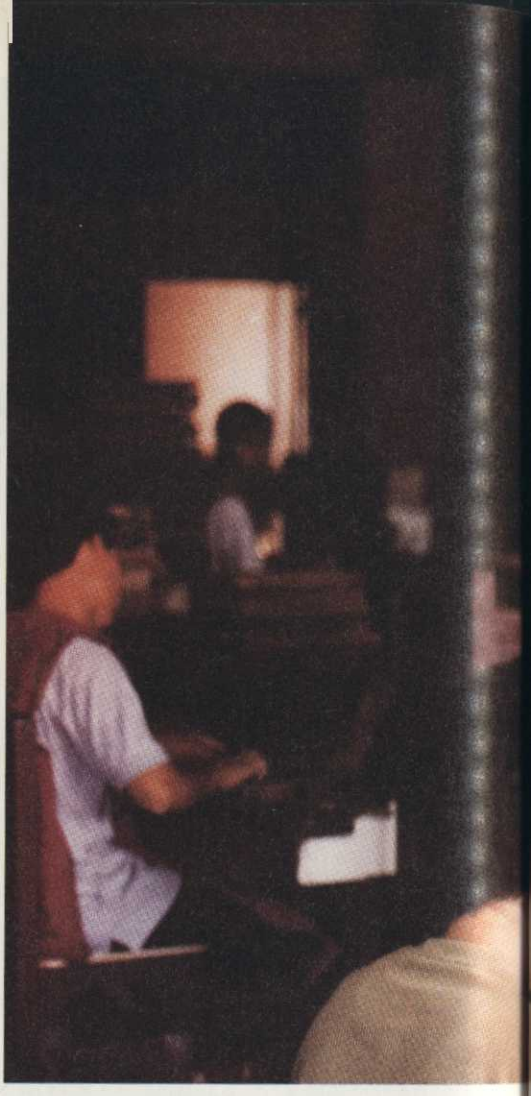
Upon my arrival, the Padrons had a proposal for me. If my schedule would allow, they wanted to visit with me in Danli and then make an afternoon trip to Nicaragua for an overnight stay and a visit to the family's larger factory in Esteli.

Details worked out, I crossed the street, packed a change of clothes, and we were off. This time, the Padrons took me through the other border crossing. This location is used more for commercial transportation, compared to the more remote single-lane entrance of my first visit.

Although he has lived in Miami for the past 30 years, the senior Padron speaks very little English. Jorge, however, has a mastery of both English and Spanish and serves as our obliging translator.

Padron now makes two cigars for the premium cigar market: Padron and Padron 30th Anniversary Series. Both are full-bodied, come in a variety of sizes and taste much like Cuban cigars did in their heyday.

Padron said he is comfortable with the size of his operation. He doesn't want the company to get too big and he definitely has no plans to make brands for other companies. The growth of the



Making boxes for millions of cigars is a major undertaking.

industry in recent years has allowed the company to stay quite busy, he assured.

After all, it was Padron who rolled his own cigars by day and sold them to Miami bars, markets and hotels by night, just 30 years ago. He has seen his one-man operation develop into an international success and has laid some fine groundwork for his family.

Rosa Wagner, the woman who is general manager of Padron's Honduran factory, offered to give me a ride to Consolidated Cigar's factory—and serve as an interpreter on my tour of the plant. We were warmly received and there was no question that Wagner should not be allowed in a competitor's factory.

The factory is quite large. This is a modern warehouse-style building, built for making a lot of cigars. Consolidated's brands made at this factory include Las Cabrillas, Don Mateo and Riata.

We spent time walking through all facets of the cigarmaking process: from aging the tobacco and sorting the leaf, to making the actual cigar, aging it again and then packaging it for retail sale. I took lots of photographs while Wagner chatted amiably with our guide.

Next, Julio Eiroa's factory. Eiroa had planned to meet with me, but was called to the United States on business and had not returned. I would at least be afforded a tour of the facilities by one of his assistants, also named Julio, who spoke some English. The young Cuban has been in Honduras only about six months and is trying to learn the Honduran cigar business. If he makes a go of it, he will send for his wife.

On this tour, I wasn't so sure it was the "out-of-place" American drawing the attention from the female workers, but instead the good-looking, neatly dressed tour guide. Some of the young ladies whispered as we passed, then giggled softly.

We toured the main factory where the Baccarat, La Fontana, Repeater and Montoya are made for Caribe Imported Cigars in Miami. Other cigars are made here for Nat Sherman, the New York company's Host Selection boasting solid flavor and a rustic, woody aroma.

Unlike most of the other factories, this facility is located in a business section of town, instead of outlying locations. Likely due to space limitations, the company has to store most of its tobacco a few blocks away in another building. It is in this building that some of Eiroa's trained rollers conduct something of a cigar school.

About 20 "students," mostly in their teens, make cigars. Each student works with an experienced roller for a period of time, watching and absorbing the craft. Then, the roles are reversed—the teachers watch the students and help them improve. Those who don't have the knack after the training period take other jobs in the cigar process or find another vocation.

On my last day in Danli, I finally caught up with the town's youngest and prettiest cigar manufacturer.

Claudia P. Matta W., 23, has been back in Danli only a short time. After college in the United States, she returned home to head up the cigar factory her father built, Honduran Cuban Tobacos. Her father is no longer involved in the daily operations of the family-owned factory.

Finished cigars are examined by Claudia P. Matta W. and boyfriend Gabriel Lardizabal, who run the Honduran Cuban Tobaccos factory.

Matta, striking and model-thin, shares something with the other cigar makers in town. She has that spark of passion in her dark brown eyes as she talks of tobacco.

She said she is learning, on a day-to-day basis.

Matta runs the business with her boyfriend, Gabriel Lardizabal, who is himself just 25. Despite their age and inexperience, the two say they have their hearts in this business and will work diligently to make a success of the company. They've accepted the challenge of their cigarmaking peers and believe the future will be quite bright.

Their facility is noticeably different. A decorative wrought-iron gate and guardhouse open up to the recently whitewashed building. All the cigar-rolling tables and chairs have been painted burgundy with an off-white trim. The floor of the factory is tile, rather than the traditional unfinished concrete. The final clincher is a brightly lit employee cafeteria, new wooden dining tables and stools. At other factories, employees simply eat lunch picnic-style on the grounds of the factory each day, sit on natural wood chairs during rolling and work in a more industrial setting. Matta has created a second home.

Here, many cigars are made for a variety of companies. The Columbus, popular in Spanish markets. Don Ramon, Senorial, Don Cristobal, Lempira. The couple believe more brands will come as the company continues to grow and they establish a name for themselves in the industry.

I was sorry when the trip ended. I'd grown attached to this place. Even my hotel room. Over the period of my stay, I slept on each of the beds. Watched endless B-movies in Spanish on my TV. I must admit that the "X-Files" did not seem as creepy in Spanish as it does in English. But on the other hand, "The Flintstones" seems even funnier.

My last night, I packed my belongings and boxes of cigars collected while touring the seven factories. I met a few of my new friends for dinner and drinks, smoked some wonderful cigars and experienced the warm fellowship of the Honduran cigar contingency.

Following dinner that night, we relaxed. Fifi, one of the "old men" of the Honduran cigar world, stopped by to bring us a platter of homemade cheeses, sausages and breads. He had time for one drink and a couple of stories before he had to head home.

At 4 a.m., Plasencia's assistant, Pedro, met me in the darkened hotel lobby. We packed the car and drove off into the predawn darkness toward the airport at Tegucigalpa.

Once atop a grand mountain range, the sun nudged slowly over the landscape, painting a colorful sunrise. Rays spread into the valleys below us on the winding road, revealing tufts of fog hanging low on the air. What did Betty say? Undeveloped?

Yes, it is. Absolutely.

And Honduras proved to be a country of friendly people, accepting of strangers. It is rustic, laid back and, when the sun is high in the sky, warm as toast. As I lit my first cigar of the morning, I hoped this place would never change. *P&T*

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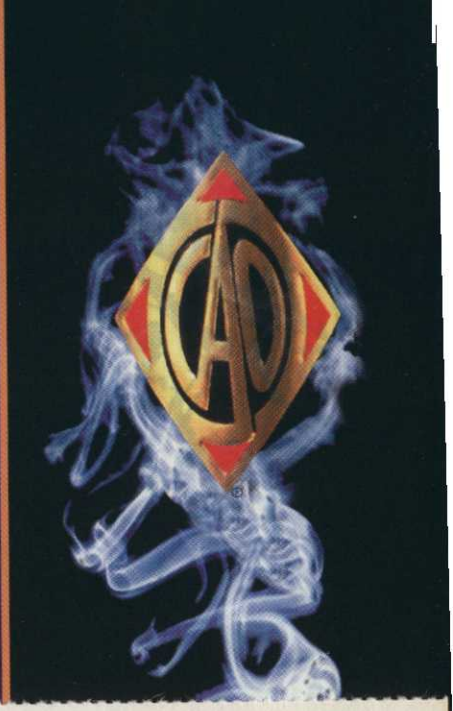

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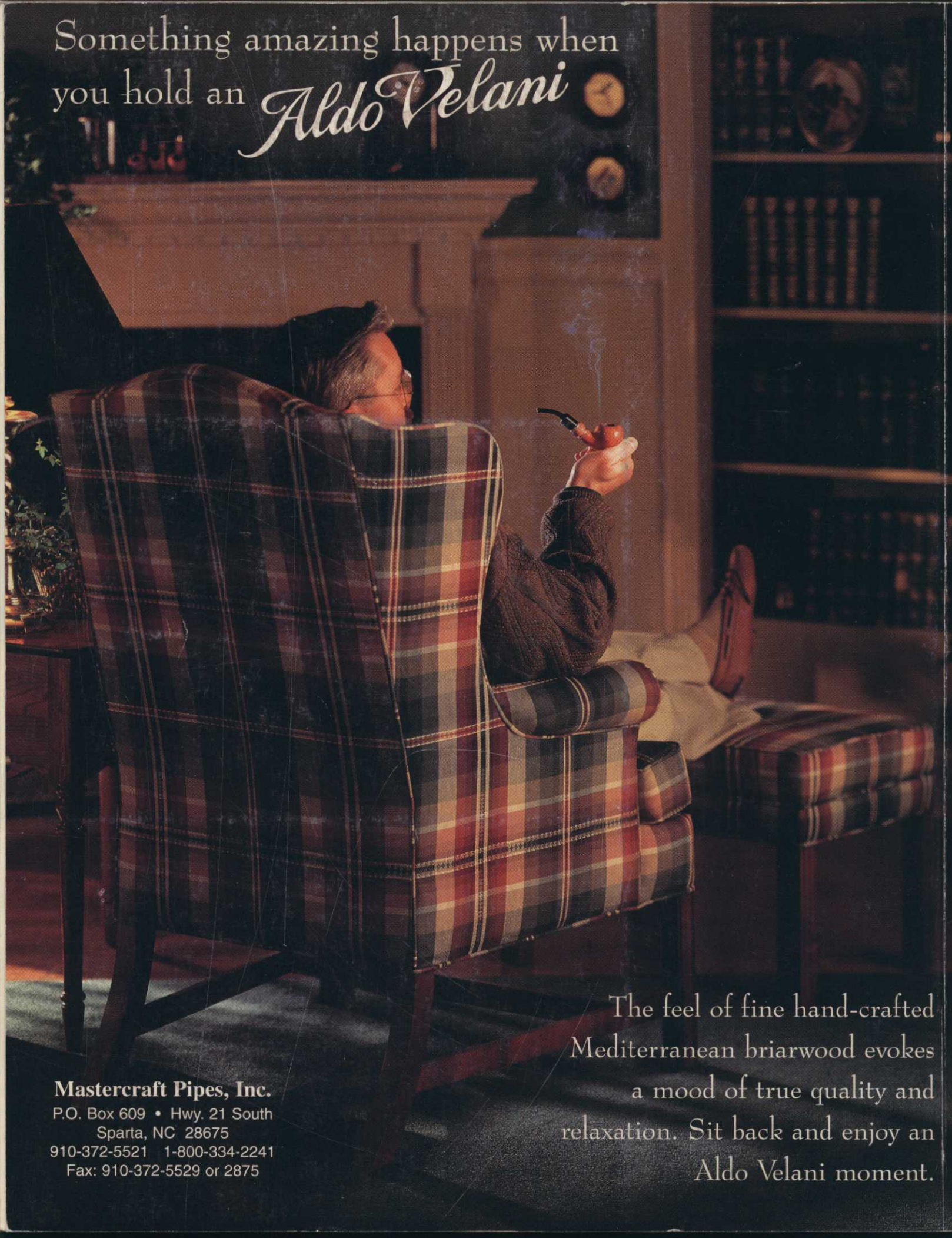
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